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A commentary on the book of
Psalms



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SELECT
CHRISTIAN AUTHORS,
WITH
INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS.

A
COMMENTARY
ON THE
BOOK OF PSALMS.

BY
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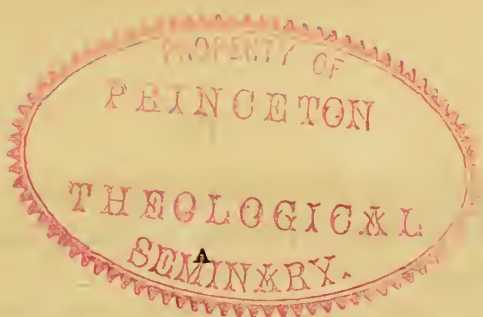
WITH
AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY THE
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COMMENTARY

ON THE

BOOK OF PSALMS.

PSALM XLVI.

ARGUMENT.—The church, in time of trouble, declares, 1. her trust and confidence to be in God, and doubts not, 2, 3. of being preserved safe, by means of this anchor, in the most stormy seasons ; even then, 4, 5. enjoying the comforts of the Spirit, and the presence of Christ in the midst of her. She describes, 6. and, 7. exults in, the power and might of her victorious Lord ; 8. calling the world to view and consider his wonderful works. 9. He himself is introduced, as speaking the nations into peace and obedience. She concludes with a repetition of ver. 7. in the way of chorus.

VERSE “ 1. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

As we are continually beset by “ troubles,” either bodily or spiritual, so we continually stand in need of a city of “ refuge and strength,” into which we may fly, and be safe. Religion is that city, whose

gates are always open to the afflicted soul. We profess to believe this; do we act agreeably to such profession?

“2. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3. *Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled, *though* the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.”

The church declares her full and firm confidence in God, as her refuge and strength, amidst all the tumults and confusions of the world, the raging of nations, and the fall of empires. Nay, at that last great and terrible day, when sea and land are to be confounded, and every mountain and hill removed for ever; when there is to be “distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring;” even then the righteous shall have no cause to “fear,” but rather to “lift up their heads” with joy and triumph, because then it is, that their “redemption draweth nigh.” Let us set that day before us, and try ourselves by that test.

“4. *There is* a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God: the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. 5. God *is* in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, *and that* right early; *Heb.* when the morning appeareth.”

Such is the ground, on which the church erects her confidence. Instead of those waters which overwhelm the world, she has within herself the fountain

of consolation, sending forth rivers of spiritual joy and pleasure; and, in the place of secular instability, she is possessed of a city and a hill which stand fast for ever, being the residence of the Eternal, who, at the dawn of the last morning, will finally appear as the protector and avenger of Israel.

“ 6. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.”

How concise, how energetic, how truly and astonishingly sublime! The kingdom of Christ being two-fold, these words may be applied either to the overthrow of Heathenism, and the establishment of the Gospel; or to the destruction of the world, and the erection of Messiah's triumphant throne. Conquer, O Lord, all our perverse affections, and reign in us, that we may conquer and reign with thee.

“ 7. The LORD of hosts *is* with us; the God of Jacob *is* our refuge; *Heb.* a high place for us.”

To the “ LORD of hosts” all creatures in heaven and earth are subject; in “ the God of Jacob,” the church acknowledges the Saviour of his chosen. If this person be IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US, of whom can we be afraid?

“ 8. Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. 9. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.”

The church, in these words, proposes to us the noblest subjects for contemplation; namely, the glorious victories of our Lord, partly gained already, and partly to be gained hereafter, in order to the final establishment of universal peace, righteousness, and bliss, in his heavenly kingdom. Then the mighty shall be fallen, and the weapons of war perished, for ever. Hasten, O Lord, that blessed day; but first prepare us for it.

“ 10. Be still, and know that I *am* God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”

In this verse there is a change of person, and Jehovah himself is introduced, as commanding the world to cease its opposition, to own his power, and to acknowledge his sovereignty over all the kingdoms of the nations. Let our rebellious passions hear this divine edict, tremble and obey.

“ 11. The LORD of hosts *is* with us; the God of Jacob *is* our refuge.” See ver. 7.

PSALM XLVII.

Ninth Day.—Evening Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—In this Psalm, appointed by the church to be used on Ascension-day, the prophet, 1. calls the nations to celebrate so glorious a festival; and that, on account, 2. of Christ's power, and the mightiness of his kingdom; 3. of his

victories and triumphs, through the gospel; 4. of the inheritance prepared for his chosen, in the heavenly Canaan, by his own ascension thither; which, 5. is described under images borrowed from the ascent of the ark into the holy city and temple; an occasion on which the Psalm was probably composed. 6, 7. He again and again exhorts all people to sing the praises of their God and King, and to sing with the understanding, as well as with the voice. 8, 9. The Psalm concludes with predicting the establishment of Christ's kingdom, and the conversion of the Gentile kings and nations to the faith.

“ 1. O clap your hands, all ye people: shout unto God with the voice of triumph.”

The prophet invites all nations to celebrate the festival of Messiah's exaltation, because all nations had a share in the benefits and blessings of that glorious day. God is to be worshipped with bodily, as well as spiritual worship: every “hand” should be lifted up to him who formed it, and every “mouth” should praise him who giveth breath for that purpose.

“ 2. For the LORD most high *is* terrible; *he is* a great King over all the earth.”

The church celebrates the ascension of Christ, because then he was “highly exalted;” then he became “terrible” to his enemies, all power in heaven and in earth being committed to him; and then he began to display the excellent majesty of his universal kingdom, to which he was then inaugurated, being crowned “King of kings, and Lord of lords.”

“ 3. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.”

The consequence of our Lord's ascension was the going forth of the all-subduing Word, under the influence and direction of which, the convinced and converted nations renounced their idols and their lusts, and bowed their willing necks to the yoke of Jesus. This is that great conquest, foreshowed by the victories of Joshua, David, and all the faithful heroes of old time, and foretold in language borrowed from their histories.

“ 4. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved.”

The land of Canaan, emphatically styled “ that good land, and the glory of all lands,” was the “ excellent inheritance” chosen for the sons of Jacob, and consigned to them, upon the expulsion of the idolatrous nations. But from that inheritance Israel also hath long since been expelled; and Christians by these words, are taught to look to “ an inheritance eternal, and incorruptible, and that fadeth not away;” to those happy and enduring mansions which the Son of God is gone to prepare for them that love him, and are beloved of him.

“ 5. God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.”

Literally, if applied to the ark, as Bishop Patrick paraphrases the verse, “ God is gone up, by the special token of his presence, into that holy place, with shouts of joy and praise; the LORD is gone up in a triumphant pomp, with the sound of the trumpet,

and all other instruments of music." See 2 Sam. vi. 5—15. 2 Chron. v. 2—12, &c. Ps. cxxxii. 8, 9. But spiritually, as applied now by the Christian church, to the ascension of Christ into heaven, prefigured by that of the ark into the temple—God incarnate is gone up into that holy place, not made with hands; the everlasting doors of heaven are opened, for the King of glory to enter, and repossess his ancient throne; there he is received by the united acclamations of the celestial armies, by that "shout," that voice of the archangel, and that "trump of God," which are to sound again, in the day when he shall "so come, in like manner, as he went into heaven."*

"6. Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. 7. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding."

Who can contemplate the glorious triumph of human nature over its enemies, in the person of our King, risen and ascended, without finding himself constrained to break forth into joy, and to sing, with a thankful heart, and an elevated voice, the praises, due unto his holy name! These divine hymns were designed for that purpose. Let us, therefore, sing them, and let us sing them "with understanding;" considering by whom they were indited, and of whom they treat; reflecting, that the eternal Spirit is their author, and their subject the blessed Jesus.

* "Ascendit Deus"—Ascendit arca in Jerusalem cum cantu. Prophetice, Ascendit Christus in cœlum. BOSSUET.

“8. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.”

We are never suffered to forget, that the end of Messiah's exaltation to the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, was the conversion and salvation of the world; so continually do the prophets and apostles delight to dwell upon that most interesting topic, the conversion of the “nations” to the Gospel of Christ. Why do we vainly fancy, that we belong to Him, unless his Spirit “reign” in our hearts by faith?

“9. The princes of the people are gathered together, *even* the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth *belong* unto God: he is greatly exalted.”

This verse plainly describeth the kings of the Gentiles as acceding to the church; as becoming, with their subjects, through faith, “the people of the God of Abraham,” and a part of the sacred peculium; as submitting to God in Christ that power with which they were invested, as “shields of the earth,” or protectors of their several kingdoms; and as bowing their sceptres to the cross of Jesus.* The sense of the verse, expressed in New Testament language, would be, “the kingdoms of this world

* This latter part of the verse is differently explained by the Rev. Mr. Merrick, in his poetical paraphrase of this Psalm:

For he, whose hands, amid the skies,
Th' eternal sceptre wield,
To earth's whole race his care applies,
And o'er them spreads his shield.

are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." So let every nation be converted unto thee, O Lord ! and every king become thy son and servant ; until all the world shall worship thee, sing of thee, and praise thy name !

PSALM XLVIII.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm is one of those which by our church are appointed to be used on Whitsunday, because, under images taken from the earthly city Jerusalem, newly rescued from her enemies by him who resided in the material temple on mount Zion, are celebrated, 1, 2, 3. the glory, the beauty, and strength of the church Christian, that city and temple of Messiah ; who, 4—7. is described as breaking in pieces, and bringing to nothing, the opposition formed against her by the Heathen kings and emperors ; on which account, 8—11. she expresseth her gratitude and joy ; 12—14. exhorting her people to contemplate and transmit to posterity, an account of those wonderful works of God, the establishment and preservation of his church in the world ; for which she wishes all generations, after her example, to adore and praise his holy name for ever and ever.

“ 1. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, *in* the mountain of his holiness.”

The prophet preparing to celebrate the beauty and magnificence of the church, begins with setting forth the praises of her great Founder ; whose wisdom, mercy, and power, as they are conspicuous in all his works, so, more especially, in this, the chief and

crown of all; for which, his name can never be sufficiently extolled, by the inhabitants of the new Jerusalem; and by them it ought to be extolled, for ever and ever.

“ 2. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, *is* mount Zion, *on* the sides of the north, the city of the great King.”

How “beautiful” is the holy and heavenly Zion, or the Christian church! how truly is she “the joy of the whole earth,” by the glad tidings which her ministers continually publish; how properly is this Jerusalem styled, “the city of the great King!”

“ 3. God *is* known in her palaces for a refuge.”

The great Founder of the church is also her protector and defender; the dependence of the new Jerusalem, like that of the old, is not in man, or in the arm of flesh, but in the God who resideth in the midst of her. For, surely, unless he kept the holy city, the watchmen in the towers would wake but in vain.

“ 4. For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together.”

Never were the power and malice of earthly princes more violently bent to hinder the building of Jerusalem, or to pull down what was already built, than they were to prevent the edification of the church, and to root up its foundations. But the event, with regard to the latter, was the same which had often happened, in the case of the former.

“ 5. They saw *it*, *and* so they marvelled; they were troubled, *and* hasted away. 6. Fear took hold upon them there, *and* pain, as of a woman in travail.”

The potentates of the world saw the miracles of the apostles, the courage and constancy of the martyrs, and the daily increase of the church, notwithstanding all their persecutions; they beheld with astonishment the rapid progress of the faith through the Roman empire; they called upon their gods, but their gods could not help themselves; idolatry expired at the foot of the victorious cross, and the power which supported it, became Christian.

“ 7. Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with the east wind.”

In the foregoing verse, the consternation amongst the enemies of the church was compared to the horrors of a travailing woman; here it is likened to the apprehensions of despairing mariners. Nor indeed can any thing in nature more fitly represent the overthrow of Heathenism by the Spirit of the Gospel, than the wreck of a fleet of ships in a storm at sea. Both are effected by the mighty power of God.*

“ 8. As we have heard, so have we seen in the

* Sensus est; qualis ventus vehemens conterit naves magni maris, talis est Dei vis tuentis Jerusalem, et hostilem exercitum dissipantis.—BOSSUET. Illustrations of this kind are sometimes introduced, by the sacred writers, with the mark of comparison; and frequently, as here, without it. The meaning evidently is, that as the east wind shatters in pieces the ships of Tarshish, so the divine power struck the Heathen kings with terror and astonishment.

city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God : God will establish it for ever."

The church heard, by the prophets, of the future birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, of Messiah: of the effusion of the Spirit, and her own enlargement, establishment, and preservation, in the Gentile world. These predictions, which she had so often "heard," she hath "seen" accomplished, even unto this day,* and therefore doubts not of God's continuing his favour and protection to the end of time.

" 9. We have thought of, *or*, we wait in silence and patience, for, thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple."

Contemplation of all the wondrous works which the Lord our God hath wrought for us, produces faith in his promises, and resignation to his will: and he that, with these dispositions, waits for God's mercies, in God's house, shall not wait in vain.

" 10. According to thy name, O God, so *is* thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness."

* Sicut audivimus"—Prophetiæ Isaia videtur hic notari: sensusque est; sicut audivimus ab Isaia prophetatum, fore ut obsidio mirabiliter solveretur, ac Sennacherabi Dux Rabsaces, ejusque exercitus caderetur; sic impletum vidimus. Isa. xxxvii. 21. 2 Reg. xix. 20. Qua figura cœlestis Jerusalem incolæ et ipsi canunt, "sicut audivimus," ex auditu fidei, Gal. iii. 25. "sic vidimus," jam sublato velo, atque aperta Dei facie. "Deus fundavit eam:" nihil habet metuendum, tanto exempta periculo. Prophetice, de Ecclesia fundata super petram, ideoque inconcussa. Matt. xvi. 18. BOSSUET.

Wherever the name of God is known, and his works are declared, there the sacrifice of praise must needs be offered to him, by men, who are made sensible of his mercies towards them: and the day is coming when all the world shall be forced to acknowledge, that his “right hand is full of righteousness,” and his judgments are just.

“11. Let Mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments.”

The church, and all her children, are exhorted to rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, on account of the manifestation of divine power, on her behalf, against her enemies. Thus, at the fall of the mystic Babylon, it is said—“Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.” Rev. xviii. 20.

“12. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. 13. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell *it* to the generations following.”

Christians are here enjoined to contemplate, again and again, continually, the fabric of the spiritual Jerusalem, wonderfully raised, and as wonderfully preserved: to consider attentively the parts designed for use, for strength, for ornament; that they may be able to instruct posterity in the nature and history of this holy building, and in their duty of forwarding and defending the same, from generation to generation.

“ 14. For this God *is* our God for ever and ever ; he will be our guide *even* unto death.”

Let the world worship whom or what it will, we worship none other but Him who, by his Spirit, founded, and, by his power, preserveth, the church ; who, by that Spirit, “ guideth ” us through life, and, by that power, will enable us to overcome “ death ; ” * that so we may rejoice and triumph for evermore, as citizens of the city of God, and subjects of the King of glory.

PSALM XLIX.

ARGUMENT.—The prophet, after a solemn introduction, 1—4. in which the whole world is called upon, to hear a lesson of divine wisdom, 5. proposes the subject in a question, implying the great folly of yielding to the temptation of fear, in the time of affliction and persecution, when the rich and the powerful are in arms against the innocent and righteous Sufferer ; inasmuch as, 5—9. no man, by his riches or power, can redeem his brother, or himself, in the evil day ; but, 10. wise and foolish die, and leave their estates to others ; and, 11—13. notwithstanding all their care and pains, are soon forgotten, while they are detained, by death, in the grave till they rise to judgment and condemnation. On the other hand, the prophet, in the person of Messiah, 15. declares his faith in a joyful resurrection to life and glory, through the power of Jehovah ; and, 16—20. exhorts believers, neither to fear nor envy the man of the world, considering what his latter end is to be.

“ 1. Hear this, all *ye* people : give ear, all *ye* in-

* “ This God will be our God to all eternity, and (by that power which he has already exerted in our protection) will conduct us through life, with safety.” MERRICK.

habitants of the world: 2. Both low and high, rich and poor, together."

This Psalm opens with great dignity, and the prophet speaks "as one having authority." He demands an audience, like that which is to be assembled at the last day; having something to deliver, which is universally important and interesting; something which concerns every age, and condition, and nation, under heaven. And we may observe, that although the sound of this Psalm, when first uttered, could be heard only within the confines of Judea, yet the knowledge of it hath since actually been diffused in the Christian church, throughout the world, from the rising to the setting sun. But how few, alas! have duly attended to the salutary lesson, which it so divinely teacheth!

"3. My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart *shall be* of understanding."

At the call of folly, what multitudes are always ready to assemble! But, Wisdom, eternal and essential Wisdom, crieth without; she lifteth up her voice in the streets; and who is at leisure to attend her heavenly lectures? The "mouth" of Jesus always "spake of wisdom;" but few regarded him: the "meditation of his heart" was ever of "understanding;" but it was accounted madness.

"4. I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp."

In the promulgation of wisdom and understanding

to the world, the prophet, as the faithful scribe of the Spirit, was to speak only what he should hear, by “inclining his ear” to his divine Teacher; he was to speak in the way of “parable,” or proverb, or problem, that is, in such a way, as should require study and diligence, to unfold and explain: in such a way, as the world is not inclined to understand, or listen to; as our Lord delivered his doctrines when on earth. And, that melody might serve as a vehicle for instruction, this important lesson was to be set to music, and played upon the harp.

“5. Wherefore should I fear in the-days of evil, *when* the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?”

“The iniquity of my heels,” says Bishop Lowth, is hardly sense. Suppose עֲקָבִי to be, not a noun, but the present participle of the verb; it will then be, “The wickedness of those that lie in wait for me,” or, “endeavour to supplant me.” Bishop Hare likewise, as Mr. Merrick has observed, translates עֲקָבִי, “insidantium mihi.” I had, at first, given another turn to the Psalmist’s question, and, by “the iniquity of my heels,” had understood to be meant, “the iniquity of my footsteps,” that is, “my goings,” or “ways;” (עֲקָבִי being used for footsteps, Ps. lvi. 7. and Cant. i. 8.) as if it had been said—Why, for the sake of procuring riches, or power, should I bring fear and anguish upon myself, in that hour, when my sins will find me out, and neither riches, nor power, can deliver me from the punishment due to them? Thus Bossuet and Mudge understood the

verse. But I am clear, that Bishop Lowth's idea is the true one; and then the purport of the question is plainly this—Why should I give way to fear and despondency, in the time of calamity, when the wickedness of my wealthy and powerful adversaries compasseth me about, to supplant and overthrow me?

“ 6. They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; 7. None *of them* can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: 8. (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:) 9. That he should still live for ever, *and* not see corruption.”

In this world, as the wise man observeth, Eccles. x. 19. “money answereth all things:” and therefore worldly men place their trust and confidence in it; but, in “the evil day,” riches shall not be found; nor, if they could be found, would they avail any thing towards eternal salvation. For, “what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” saith one, who best knew the value of souls; as he paid the price of that “precious redemption,” which otherwise must have “ceased for ever;” when he suffered for us on the cross, and arose, on the third day, to life and immortality, without “seeing corruption.”*

* Hos versus ad Christum patres referunt, ut sensus sit, nemo purus homo fratrem redimit, sed tantum ille homo qui etiam Deus est. Memorant etiam interpretes R. Mosen Hazardan, qui verba hæc de Rege Messia intelligit, qui pro redemptione fratrum mortuus, postea in æternum vivat, uti prædictum est ab Isaia liii. 10. BOSSUET.

“ 10. For he seeth *that* wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.”

The inability of man to save his brother or himself from death, is evinced by daily experience, which showeth us, that the penalty due to sin is continually levied upon all: wisdom and folly go down into the dust together; “and then, whose shall those things be, which have been provided?” Luke xii. 20. Their possessions come into the hands of others, perhaps of those for whom they never intended them, and who have neither inclination nor ability to do the dead man any service.

“ 11. Their inward thought *is, that* their houses *shall continue* for ever; *and* their dwelling-places to all generations; they call *their* lands after their own names.”

Various are the contrivances of vain men, to have their names written on earth, and to procure, after their deaths, an imaginary immortality, for themselves and their families, in the memory and conversation of posterity; which is not often obtained; and, if obtained, is of no value; when, with less trouble, they might have had their names written in heaven, and have secured to themselves a blessed immortality, in the glorious kingdom of their Redeemer.

“ 12. Nevertheless, man *being* in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts *that* perish.”

The continuance of man in the world is as that of a traveller at an inn, who tarrieth but for a night: so

that if honour and wealth do not soon leave him, he must soon leave them, and, like the brutes around him, return to his earth, never more to be seen, and little more to be thought of.* Families decay, and are extinguished, as well as individuals; and the world itself is to perish after the same example. That such beings, in such a place, should think of becoming glorious and immortal!

“ 13. This their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings.”

The practice of labouring to acquire wealth and greatness, which can be of no service after death, and of endeavouring to perpetuate the possession of the most uncertain things in nature, is doubtless a folly; but it is a folly which, like many others, is at once blamed, and imitated.

“ 14. Like sheep that, *or*, they, are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.”

The high and mighty ones of the earth, who cause people to fear, and nations to tremble around them, must one day crowd the grave; in multitude and impotence, though not in innocence, resembling sheep, driven and confined by the butcher, in his house of

* “ Comparatus est jumentis ;” quoad temporalia, nihil habet amplius, atque omnino instar jumenti est, nisi æterna meditatur. BOSSUET.

slaughter. There death, that ravening wolf, shall feed sweetly on them, and devour his long-expected prey, in silence and darkness, until the glorious morning of the resurrection dawn; when the once oppressed and afflicted righteous, risen from the dead, and sitting, with their Lord, in judgment, shall have the dominion over their cruel and insulting enemies; whose faded beauty, withered strength, and departed glory, shall display to men and angels the vanity of that confidence which is not placed in God.

“ 15. But God will redeem my soul, *or*, animal frame, from the power of the grave; for he shall receive me.”

The righteous, as well as the wicked, descend into the grave; to the bodies of the former it is a resting place, as the prison was to St. Peter, till the angel of the Lord shall awaken them, and call them forth; while to the latter it is a condemned hold, from which, at the appointed day, they are to be dragged to execution.* The prophet here expresseth a full and firm faith in the resurrection; and may be conceived as speaking in the person of Him who was first redeemed from the grave, and accepted by the Father; who did not “despond in the days of evil, and when the wickedness of his supplanters compassed him about:” as foreseeing their speedy destruction, and

* Impiorum inanitate despecta, assurgit ad bonos in Deum sperantes, quorum Deus animam ab inferis redimit, cum a sepulchro assumptos ad vitam æternam transfert. Alioqui, neque qui sperat in Domino plus reliquis haberet, neque præfationi responderet hujus Psalmi doctrina. BOSSUET.

his own approaching resurrection and exaltation. And, therefore, he thus exhorts each disciple of his in the subsequent verses of our Psalm:—

“ 16. Be not thou afraid when one is made rich; when the glory of his house is increased. 17. For when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him.”

This is the conclusion of the Psalm, naturally following from the premises; and addressed, by way of exhortation and comfort, to the meek and humble disciples of the Lamb; directing them to fear God, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell, and not to be afraid of the short-lived power conferred in this world, by wealth, over the body only. For this purpose, nothing is requisite, but to strip the worldling of the pomp and parade, the connections and relations of life, and to consider him, as he is to appear on the day of his burial, when nothing shall attend him, but his shroud, to the grave, and his works to the judgment-seat. View him in this light, which is the proper light to view him in, and he will cease to be the object of fear or envy.

“ 18. Though while he lived, he blessed his soul; and *men* will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.”

Such must be the worldling's end, as described above; however, in the day of health and prosperity, he may bless himself, and say, “ Soul thou hast goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” Nor will such a speech,

whenever it is spoken, want its admirers; it will have the applause of numbers, whose opinion it is, that “there is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat, and drink, and enjoy himself, all the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.”

“19. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.”

They who follow their fathers in sin, must follow them likewise into the torments of that sad place where darkness has fixed its everlasting abode, for the reception of those that ever loved and embraced it; and where the light of life and salvation no longer visits those, who always hated and rejected it.

“20. Man *that is* in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beast that perish.”

The sum of the whole matter is, that it can profit a man nothing to gain the whole world; to become possessed of all its wealth, and all its power; if, after all, he lose his own soul, and be cast away, for want of that holy and heavenly wisdom which distinguishes him from the brutes, and sets him above them, in his life, and at his death.

PSALM L.

Tenth Day.—Morning Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm presents us with a magnificent description, 1, 2. of the promulgation of the Gospel, followed, 3, 4. by a prediction of the terrible manner of God's coming to judge his apostate people, Israel;* 5, 6. of the assembly to be present, and his appeal to men and angels; 7—13. the rejection of the legal, and, 14, 15. the establishment of the Christian worship and services; 16—20. the impenitent Jews are arraigned, and, 21. threatened; and, 22. exhorted to consider, to repent; and, 23. to embrace the evangelical, or spiritual religion. It is to be observed, that in this Psalm, as in our Lord's discourse on the same subject, the particular judgment of Jerusalem is a figure and specimen of the last general judg-

* Such is the general idea entertained of this Psalm, by the best Christian expositors, cited in Poole's Synopsis, where we are likewise informed, that the Jewish Rabbies affirm the subject of it to be, "that judgment which will be executed in the days of Messiah"—ignorant, alas! that they themselves, and their people, are now become the unhappy objects of that judgment.—"Psalmi quinquagesimi argumentum est ex genere didactico ad moralem theologiam pertinens, grave imprimis et fructuosum: Deo nimirum non placere sacrificia et externos ritus religionis, sed sinceram potius pietatem, laudesque ex grato animo profluentes; neque vero has ipsas pietatis significationes, sine justitia cæterisque virtutibus. Ita duas habet partes; primo arguitur cultor pius quidem, sed ignarus et superstitioni obnoxius; deinde improbus pietatis simulator. Si totum hujusce odæ apparatus et quasi scenam contemplamur, nihil facile potest esse magnificentius. Deus universum genus humanum solenni edicto convocat, ut de populo suo judicium publice exercent; ponitur in Sione augustum tribunal: depingitur Dei advenientis majestas imaginibus a descensu in montem Sinam petitis: cælum et terra invocantur divinæ justitiæ testes: tum demum inducitur Dei ipsius sententiam dicentis augustissima persona, per reliquam oden continuata; unde cum cæteris ejus partibus admirabilis illa exordii majestas et splendor communicatur." LOWTH, Prælect. xxvii. ad init.

ment. Hypocritical and wicked Christians are therefore to apply to themselves what is primarily addressed to their elder brethren, the unbelieving and rebellious sons of faithful and obedient Abraham.

“ 1. The mighty God, *even* the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun, unto the going down thereof.”

“ God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son:” Heb. i. 1. The everlasting Gospel hath made its glorious progress from the eastern to the western world; and the nations have been thereby called to repentance.

“ 2. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.”

The law which was given by Moses, proceeded from Sinai, the mount of fear and horror; but the word of grace and truth, which came by Jesus Christ, issued forth from Sion, the chosen mountain of beauty and excellency, in Jerusalem. There that glory first arose and shone, which, like the light of heaven, soon diffused itself abroad over the face of the whole earth.

“ 3. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.”

The prophet, having described the first advent of Christ, and the promulgation of the Gospel, now foretelleth his coming to take vengeance on the hypocritical Jews, as also, his advent to judge the world,

prefigured thereby. Upon both those occasions, his coming was to be with sounds and sights of terror, with all the marks and tokens of wrath and fiery indignation, like those displayed on Sinai.

“ 4. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.”

Heaven and earth, men and angels, were to be witnesses of the righteous judgments of God, executed upon his apostate people; as all the celestial armies, and all the generations of the sons of Adam, are to be present, at the general judgment of the last day.

“ 5. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.”

These are the words of God, summoning mankind to attend the trial, “ calling to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.” Thus it is said of the Son of man, Matt. xxiv. 31. “ He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

“ 6. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness; for God *is* judge himself.”

Th' applauding heav'ns the changeless doom,
While God the balance shall assume,
In full memorial shall record,
And own the justice of their Lord.

MERRICK.

“ 7. Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O

Israel, and I will testify against thee: I *am* God, *even* thy God."

This is the voice of the omniscient Judge, imploring his ancient people, who are commanded to attend to the words of him, their God and covenanted Saviour, thus constrained to clear his justice before the world, and to show that they had destroyed themselves. Nominal and wicked Christians will be addressed in the same manner at the last day.

"8. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt-offerings, *to have been, or, they were,* continually before me."

This judicial process was not commenced against Israel, for their having neglected to offer the sacrifices of the law; their oblations were on the altar, morning and evening, continually, insomuch that God, by the prophet Isaiah, declares himself "weary of them," as not having been accompanied with faith and holiness in the offerer. Many pharisaical Christians will be condemned for the same reason, notwithstanding their strict and scrupulous attendance upon the ordinances of the new law, if it shall appear, that they left religion in the church behind them, instead of carrying it with them into their lives and conversations.

"9. I will take no bullock out of thine house, *nor* he-goats out of thy folds. 10. For every beast of the forest *is* mine, *and* the cattle upon a thousand hills. 11. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field *are* mine. 12. If I were

hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.”

The Jewish folly of doating on the legal offerings, as things in themselves acceptable to God, and conferring justification on man, is reprov'd in these verses, from the consideration, that the various animals slain in sacrifice, were long before, even from the creation of the world, the sole right and property of Jehovah; which, therefore, he needed not to have required at the hands of his people; nor would he have done so, but for some farther end and intent, signified and represented by such oblations. What that end and intent was, Christians know; and Jews formerly did know. Learn we hence, not to dream of any merit in our works and services; since God hath a double claim, founded on creation and redemption, to all we have, and all we are.

“ 13. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?”

Another argument of the Jews' blindness is, the gross absurdity of imagining, that a spiritual and holy being could possibly be satisfied and pleased with the taste and smell of burnt-offerings (which God often declareth himself to have been,) any otherwise, than as they were symbolical of some other sacrifice, spiritual and holy, and, therefore, really propitiatory and acceptable in his sight. That man judaizeth, who thinketh to please God by an external, without an internal service; or by any service, without Christ.

“ 14. Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy

vows unto the most High: 15. And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”

The carnal and bloody sacrifices of the law being abolished by the coming of Messiah, the spiritual and unbloody oblations of the Gospel succeed in their stead. These are, the eucharistic sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for the mercies of redemption; that hearty repentance, that faith unfeigned, and that obedience evangelical, promised and vowed in baptism: that perfect trust in God, and resignation to his will, which our Lord expressed in his prayer, during his sufferings, and which we ought to express in our prayers, when called to suffer with him, if we desire to glorify God for our deliverance through him, in the day of visitation. These are the services enjoined to such Jews as would become Christians, and to such Christians, as would be Christians in deed and in truth.

“ 16. But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or *that* thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth: 17. Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee?”

From hence, to the end of the Psalm, we have an expostulation of God with the unbelieving Jew, who boasted his relation to Abraham, without a spark of Abraham's faith in his heart; and gloried in a law, which condemned him as a breaker of its precepts in every instance. St. Paul's expostulation with the same person, Rom. ii. 17, &c. is so exact a parallel

to this before us, that the one will be the best comment upon the other—"Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law. Thou, therefore, that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law, dishonourest thou God?" Every minister of God should try and examine himself by these passages in our Psalm and St. Paul, on the former of which the famous Origen is once said to have preached, making application to his own case, not without many tears. And indeed, "if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who among us all shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee:" Ps. cxxx. 3, 4.

"18. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers."

St. Paul proceeds in the very same manner—"Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?" All Christians, the clergy especially, should beware not only of committing evil themselves, but of "consenting" to, or "partaking" of, the evil committed by others.

“ 19. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. 20. Thou sittest *and* speakest against thy brother: thou slanderest thine own mother’s son.”

Had St. Paul thought proper to have gone on to this instance, he might have said—“Thou that teachest a man should not bear false witness, dost thou bear false witness?” For certainly never men brake that commandment in a more flagrant manner than the Jews; never men “gave” their “mouth” more “to evil,” or “framed” more “deceit,” than they, when they “sat and spake against their brethren,” and “slandered their own mothers’ children,” for believing in Jesus Christ. Let us look at this picture of slander, and we shall never fall in love with so detestable a vice.

“ 21. These *things* hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such a one* as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes.”

The forbearance of God only tempted the Jews still to think him on their side, till at length he made the Roman armies his instruments of conviction; who, by crucifying multitudes of their countrymen in sight of the besieged, did in a wonderful manner “reprove them, and set before them the things which they had done.” The day of judgment will do this to all sinners, if temporal chastisements effect it not, before that day shall come.

“ 22. Now consider this, ye that forget God,

lest I tear *you* in pieces, and *there be* none to deliver.”

The stupendous desolation of Jerusalem, for rejecting so kind an admonition of her Saviour, and suffering him to weep over her in vain, should, in a most powerful manner, enforce that admonition on the inhabitants of Christendom, to prevent its falling, after the same example of unbelief.

“ 23. Whoso offereth me praise, glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth *his* conversation *aright*, will I show the salvation of God.”

This verse resumes and repeats the conclusion intended, by the whole Psalm, concerning the Jewish and the Christian worship; and St. Paul, in the place above cited, affords us a complete comment upon it: “ He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; nor is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

PSALM LI.

ARGUMENT.—In this Psalm, composed upon a sad occasion, but too well known, we have a perfect model of penitential devotion. The royal supplicant, robed in sackcloth, and crowned with ashes, entreats for mercy, 1, 2. from a consideration of his own misery, and of the divine goodness: 3. from that of his confession, 4. of God’s sole right to judge him; 5. laments the corruption of his nature; but, 6. without pleading it as an excuse; 7. prays for Gospel remission, in legal terms; 8. for spiritual joy and comfort; 9, 10. for pardoning and cleansing grace; 11, 12. for strength and perseverance, that he may, 13.

instruct and convert others; 14, 15. deprecates the vengeance due to blood; 16, 17. beseeches God to accept an evangelical sacrifice; and 18, 19. concludes with a prayer for the church.

“ 1. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.”

The penitent's first ground for hope of pardon, is his own misery, and the divine mercy, which rejoiceth to relieve that misery. The riches, the power, and the glory of a kingdom, can neither prevent nor remove the torment of sin, which puts the monarch and the beggar upon a level. Every transgression leaves behind it a guilt, and a stain; the account between God and the sinner is crossed by the blood of the great propitiatory sacrifice, which removes the former; and the soul is cleansed by the Holy Spirit, which takes out the latter.

“ 2. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.”

The soul that is sensible of her pollution, fears she can never be sufficiently purified from it; and therefore prays, yet again and again, continually, for more abundant grace, to make and to keep her holy.

“ 3. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.”

The penitent's second plea for mercy is, that he doth not deny, excuse, or palliate his fault, but confesses it openly and honestly, with all its aggravations, truly alleging, that it haunts him night and day, causing his conscience incessantly to reproach

him with his base ingratitude to a good and gracious Father.

“ 4. Against, *or*, to thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight; that thou mightest, *or*, therefore thou wilt, be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.”

A third reason why the penitent sues for mercy at the hand of God is, because God alone certainly knows, and is always able to punish, the sins of men. David sinned “against” many; as against Uriah, whom he slew; against Bathsheba, whom he corrupted; and against all the people, to whom he became the cause of much offence, and scandal. But the sin was committed in secret; and if it had not been so, he, as king, had no superior, or judge, in this matter, but God only; who, being able to convict the offender, as he did, by the prophet Nathan, would assuredly be justified in the sentence he should pronounce. And he will appear to be so in his determinations at the last day, when he will surprise the wretched unthinking sinner, with a declaration similar to that which he made, by his prophet, to the royal offender, 2 Sam. xii. 12. “Thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.”

“ 5. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

The divine mercy is implored by the penitent, fourthly, because that alone can dry up the fountain of original corruption, from which the streams of actual transgression derive themselves; and which is

here only lamented as their cause, not alleged as their excuse; seeing, that the greater our danger is of falling, the greater should be our care to stand. David was the offspring of the marriage-bed, which is declared to be “honourable and undefiled.” No more, therefore, can be intended here, than that a creature begotten by a sinner, and formed in the womb of a sinner, cannot be without that taint which is hereditary to every son and daughter of Adam and Eve.*

“ 6. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, *Heb.* the reins; and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make, *or*, hast made, me know wisdom.”

The force of “Behold,” is—“It is too plain; I feel it but too sensibly, the punishment I suffer is evidence sufficient, that thou art not contented with a superficial appearance of goodness: thou lovest truth and sincerity in the bottom of the heart.” This God was now teaching him, by the correction he made him suffer. The punishment inflicted tended to give him a right understanding of things, and to work it deep into him. MUDGE.

“ 7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

He therefore petitioneth in this verse, for the

* And so much must surely be intended, as the learned Bossuet observeth—Numquid David de adulterio natus erat? De Jesse viro justo natus erat, et conjugē ipsius. Quid ergo se dicit in iniquitate conceptum, nisi quia suscepit personam humani generis, et attendit omnium vincula, propaginem mortis, originem iniquitatis advertit?

purification which cometh from God only, through the one great propitiatory sacrifice, by the Holy Spirit; and which was foreshown, under the law, by the ceremony of sprinkling the unclean person with a bunch of "hyssop," dipped in the "water of separation." This rite is described, Numb. xix. and explained, Heb. ix. 13, 14. "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" From the latter part of the verse we learn, that, by grace and mercy, the pardoned penitent is arrayed in garments no less pure and splendid than those of innocence itself.

"8. Make me to hear joy and gladness, *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken, may rejoice."

Next to the blessing of forgiveness, is to be desired that joy and comfort in the conscience which forgiveness only can inspire: the effect of this, in repairing the vigour of the spirit, decayed through sorrow and anguish, is compared to setting broken bones, and restoring them again to perfect strength. At the resurrection of the body, this petition will be granted in a literal sense, when the "bones," that are mouldered into dust, shall "rejoice, and flourish as an herb." Isa. lxvi. 14.

"9. Hide thy face from my sins; and blot out all mine iniquities."

The soul, still restless and uneasy, reiterates her

request, that God would not only cease to behold her iniquity for the present, as a man who turneth away his face from a writing, but that he would not behold it more, as a man who blotteth out what is written, so that it can never be read again.

“ 10. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right, *or*, constant, spirit within me.”

The purification and renovation of the heart and spirit of a man is a work to which that power only is equal which, in the beginning, created all things, and, in the end, will create all things new. “ A right spirit is renewed within us,” when the affections turn from the world to God, and charity takes the place of concupiscence.

“ 11. Cast me not away *from* thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me.”

The soul that is truly penitent, dreads nothing but the thought of being rejected from the “presence,” and deserted by the “ Spirit” of God. This is the most deplorable and irremediable effect of sin: but it is one, that in general perhaps is the least considered and regarded of all others.

“ 12. Restore to me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free, *or*, princely, *or*, liberal, Spirit.”

David prayeth to God to restore to him the unspeakable joy of that salvation which, as a prophet, he had so often contemplated, and celebrated in his divine compositions; he prayeth also to be preserved and continued in that state of salvation, by the Spirit

of God, which might enable him to act as became a prophet and a king, free from base desires and enslaving lusts.

“ 13. *Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.”

He that would employ his abilities, his influence, and his authority, in the reformation of others, must take care to reform himself, before he enters upon the work. “ When thou art converted,” said Christ to St. Peter, “ strengthen thy brethren.” Luke xxii. 32. The history of David has “ taught” us many useful lessons; such as, the frailty of man, the danger of temptation, the torment of sin, the nature and efficacy of repentance, the mercy and the judgments of God, &c. &c. by which many “ sinners” have in all ages since been “ converted,” and many more will be converted, so long as the Scriptures shall be read, and the 51st Psalm recited in the church.

“ 14. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: *and* my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.”

The unhappy criminal entreats, in this verse, for the divine help and deliverance, as if he not only heard the voice of innocent blood crying from the ground, but as if he saw the murdered Uriah coming upon him for vengeance, like an armed man. If he can but obtain the pardon of this sin, he promises to publish to all the world the righteousness of God, who justifieth sinners, and sheweth mercy to the penitent; though he must, at the same time, publish likewise his own heinous and horrid wickedness.

“ 15. O LORD, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.”

The mouth which sin hath closed, can only be opened by pardon: and to show this, he who came, conferring pardon, caused the tongue of the dumb to speak, and to sing praises to the Lord God of Israel. Our church, with great propriety, daily maketh her prayer in the words of this verse, before she entereth upon that part of her service which consisteth of praise and thanksgiving.

“ 16. For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give *it*; thou delightest not in burnt-offerings. 17. The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

David, in this Psalm, is so evangelical, and has his thoughts so fixed upon Gospel remission, that he considers the Levitical sacrifices as already abolished, for their insufficiency to take away sin; affirming them to be (as indeed they were) nothing in the sight of God, if compared with the sacrifice of the body of sin, offered by contrition and mortification, through faith in Him who, in the fulness of time, was to die unto sin once, that we, together with him, might for ever live unto God.

“ 18. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.”

The king forgets not to ask mercy for his people, as well as for himself; that so neither his own nor their sins might prevent either the building and flourishing of the earthly Jerusalem, or, what was of in-

finitely greater importance, the promised blessing of Messiah, who was to descend from him, and to rear the walls of the new Jerusalem. And thus it ought to be the fervent prayer of every man, especially if he be placed in any exalted station, ecclesiastical or civil, that no sins by him committed, may any way prejudice others, or obstruct the edification of the church.

“ 19. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt-offering, and whole burnt-offering; then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.”

This had its literal accomplishment, when Jerusalem was finished; when the temple was erected on mount Sion; and when the Lord graciously vouchsafed to accept the sacrifices there offered, on his holy altars, by king Solomon, at the head of his faithful and devout people. It is spiritually true in the Christian church, where the substance of all the Mo-saic types and shadows is offered and presented to the Father, by the Prince of Peace, at the head of the Israel of God. And it will be eternally verified in the kingdom of heaven, where the sacrifices of righteousness and love, of praise and thanksgiving, will never cease to be offered to him that sitteth on the throne, by the church triumphant in glory.

PSALM LII.

ARGUMENT.—In the person of Doeg the Edomite, who was persecutor of David, and the murderer of the priests, are described, 1—4. the enemies of the truth and the church in all ages; whose utter destruction from the presence of the Lord is foretold, 5. with the exultation of the righteous over them, 6, 7; these last rejoice, 8. in their flourishing state under grace, 9. in hope of future glory, through faith and patience.

“1. Why boasteth thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God *endureth* continually.”

“The Psalmist thought it strange,” says the pious and ingenious Norris, “that any man should value himself for being able to do mischief, when God esteemed it his glory to do good.” In vain did Doeg the Edomite boast himself, in the mischief he had done, by massacring the innocent priests and their families; since “the goodness of God,” which is “unchangeable,” had decreed the preservation of David. As vainly did Herod, the Idumean, or Edomite, glory in the slaughter of the Bethlehemitish infants, since heaven had determined, that the child Jesus should not be one of the number. A persecution may produce martyrs; but the gates of hell are never to prevail against the church.

“2. Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.”

The mischief done to religion by men of Doeg’s turn, is done by the tongue, before it is done by the

hand; it is planned leisurely, and executed speedily and deceitfully.*

“3. Thou lovest evil more than good; *and* lying rather than to speak righteousness. 4. Thou lovest all-devouring words, *O thou* deceitful tongue.”

As the Christian spirit delighteth itself in goodness, truth, and charity, so the antichristian spirit is here characterized by its offending, not out of ignorance, or inadvertence, but mere love of wickedness, falsehood, and malice. To this pitch many have arrived: and who, that enters upon a course of sin, can say, that he shall stop short of it?

“5. God shall likewise destroy thee for ever; he shall cast thee away, and pluck thee out of *thy* dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living.”

Wonderful is the force of the verbs in the original, which convey to us the four ideas of “laying prostrate, dissolving as by fire, sweeping away as with a besom, and totally extirpating root and branch,” as a tree is eradicated from the spot on which it grew. If a farther comment be wanted, it may be found in the history of David’s enemies, and the crucifiers of the Son of David; but the passage will be fully and finally explained by the destruction of the world of the ungodly at the last day.

* “Sicut novacula acuta”—quæ cum tangere leniter et tantum radere videretur, alte infigitur, ac velut blandiendi specie vulnerat: ita Doeg cum Achimelech in tabernaculo Domini amicitia pietatisque specie versatus, fædo indicio viros optimos prodigit. 1 Reg. xxi. 7. xxii 9. BOSSUET. So Mudge—“Working treacherously,” that is, Thy tongue is like a sharp razor, that cuts one’s throat before one is aware of it.

“ 6. The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him, *saying*, 7. Lo, *this is* the man *that* made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, *and* strengthened himself in his wickedness.”

Such shall be the triumph of Messiah, and of all his faithful servants with him, over the enemies of man's salvation, at that hour, when, the world being in flames, the confidence, that hath been placed in it, must perish for evermore.

“ 8. But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.”

The representative of Messiah portrays himself, as the reverse of Doeg and the wicked, in terms applicable likewise to his great original. He was in the house of God, they were in the world: he was as a fruitful olive tree, they were as barren unprofitable wood; he was to be daily more and more strengthened, established, settled, and increased; they were to be cast down, broken, swept away, and extirpated; and all this, because he had trusted in the mercy of God, they in the abundance of their riches. We Gentiles were branches of the “wild olive,” but are now grafted into the good one: Lord, make us to flourish and bear fruit, in thy immortal “courts,” world without end!

“ 9. I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done *it*; and I will wait on thy name, for *it is* good* before thy saints.”

* It is a “goodly thing,” it carries a good appearance, it looks well before the friends of God, to see me praising him, and putting my trust in him.—MUDGE.

Faith foresees salvation, and anticipates the day of victory and triumph; in the mean time, while she waiteth patiently for its coming, she refresheth and comforteth herself with frequent meditation on the virtue and power of that saving “name,” which is “as ointment poured forth;” by the fragrance of its odours inviting and alluring innumerable converts to run after their beloved Redeemer, in the way of his commandments.

PSALM LIII.

Tenth Day.—Evening Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm is in a manner the same with Psalm xiv. except that there is some difference in ver. 5. The comment on Psalm xiv. is therefore here repeated. It sets forth, 1—3. the corruption of the world; 4—5. its enmity against the people of God; 6. the prophet longs and prays for salvation.

“1. The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.* Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: *there is none that doeth good.*”

It does not appear upon what occasion David composed this Psalm. The revolt of Israel in Absalom’s rebellion, is by most writers pitched upon as the subject of it. But, be this as it may, the expressions are general, and evidently designed to extend beyond a private interpretation. And accordingly, the apostle, Rom. iii. 10, &c. produces some passages from it to evince the apostacy of both Jews and Gentiles from their King and their God, and to

prove them to be all under sin. In this light, therefore, we are to consider it, as characterizing the principles and practices of those who oppose the Gospel of Christ in all ages. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Infidelity is the beginning of sin, folly the foundation of infidelity, and the heart the seat of both. "Their foolish heart (says St. Paul of the heathen, Rom. i. 21.) was darkened." The sad consequence of defection in principle, is corruption in practice. "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." On these words the reader may see a full comment, Rom. i. 28—32.

"2. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek God. 3. Every one of them is gone back; they are altogether become filthy: *there* is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Like a watchman on the top of some lofty tower, God is represented as surveying, from his heavenly throne, the sons of Adam, and their proceedings upon the earth; he scrutinizes them, and as it were searches diligently, to find among them a man of true wisdom, one whose heart was turned toward the Lord his God, one who was inquiring the way to salvation and glory, that he might walk therein. But as the result of this extensive and accurate survey, God informs his prophet, and commissions him to inform the world, that all had declined from the paths of wisdom and righteousness; that the mass of human nature was become putrid, requiring to be cleansed, and the vessels made up of it to be formed

anew. Such is the Scripture account of man, not having received grace, or having fallen from it; of man without Christ, or in arms against him. See Rom. iii. 11, 12.

“4. Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people *as* they eat bread: they have not called upon God.”

The “workers of iniquity” work for the wages of death; they fight against God and their own souls; they barter eternity for time, and part with happiness for misery, both in possession and reversion. Well therefore may it be asked, “Have they no knowledge?” For common sense, after all, is what they want. They who, with an appetite keen as that to their food, prey upon the poor, and devour the people of God, will themselves be preyed upon and devoured by that roaring lion, whose agents for the present they are; and such as now “call not on” the name of “the Lord” Jesus for pardon and salvation, shall hereafter call in vain upon the rocks and mountains, to shelter them from his power and vengeance.

“5. There were they in great fear, *where* no fear was; for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth *against* thee: thou hast put *them* to shame, because God hath despised them.”

David is supposed to be speaking primarily of Israel’s defection from him to Absalom, and here to be assigning the motive of that defection in many, namely, fear of the rebel’s growing power, and distrust of his ability to protect them; which fear, he

observes, was groundless, because his cause was the cause of God, who would not fail to appear in its support and vindication. The subjects of Christ, in times of persecution, are often tempted to renounce their allegiance, upon the same principle of fear; although of them it may more emphatically be said, that they “fear where no fear is, since God is in the generation of the righteous;” and they who are engaged on the side of Messiah, will, in the end, most assuredly be triumphant. “For God hath scattered, or, shall scatter, the bones of him that encampeth against thee; thou hast, or shalt, put them to shame, because God hath despised them:” the sense of which is evidently the same with—“God is in the generation of the righteous:” Psal. xiv. 5. he will defend them and overthrow their enemies: therefore let them not fear, neither let their hearts be troubled. If this interpretation be disapproved, the words, “There were they in great fear,” must be understood of the enemy; and the clause, “where no fear was,” must be rendered interrogatively thus, “and was there not cause for them to fear? since God is in the generation of the righteous, or, will scatter the bones of him that encampeth against thee,” &c.

“6. O that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.”

The consideration of the apostacy and corruption of mankind, described in this Psalm, makes the prophet express a longing desire for the salvation of Israel, which was to go forth out of Zion, and to bring

back the people of God from that most dreadful of all captivities, the captivity under sin and death; a salvation, at which Jacob would indeed rejoice, and Israel be glad. And how doth the whole church, at this time, languish for the consummation of her felicity, looking, even until her eyes fail, for that glorious day of final redemption, when every believing heart shall exult, and all the sons of God shout aloud for joy!

PSALM LIV.

ARGUMENT.—David, as it has been supposed, when betrayed by the Ziphites, and surrounded by Saul, 1, 2. committeth his cause, and preferreth his prayer, to God; 3. complaineth of his cruel treatment; 4, 5. expresseth his assurance of the divine favour, and the destruction of his enemies. 6, 7. being delivered from his danger, he blesseth and praiseth God. See the history, 1 Sam. xxiii. The application to Christ, and to Christians, is plain and easy; for which reason, our church hath appointed this Psalm to be read on Good Friday.

“ 1. Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength. 2. Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.”

Happy the man, to whom, in the day of trouble, the “name of the Lord is a strong tower,” into which “he runneth, and is safe;” Prov. xviii. 10. Happy the man, that can, with a holy confidence, commit his cause to the judgment and determination of God, and expect redress from the Almighty. His prayer mounteth up to heaven, and returneth not without a blessing.

“ 3. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them.”

The Ziphites, though David's countrymen, acted the part of “strangers,” or “aliens,” in seeking to deliver him up to his unjust and cruel enemy. Such a part did the whole Jewish nation act towards their anointed Prince and Saviour, when they actually delivered him over to the Roman power. And the church frequently meeteth with such treatment at the hands of her children, as she had reason to expect only from “strangers to the covenant of promise.” Something like this always happens, when men, instead of setting God, set the world before their eyes.

“ 4. Behold, God is mine helper: the LORD *is* with them that uphold my soul. 5. He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off, *or*, thou shalt cut off, in thy truth.”

In all dangers and difficulties, whether temporal or spiritual, the faithful sons and servants of God fix their eyes upon their heavenly Father, and gracious Master: they have recourse to the divine promises, the performance of which they know to be certain, and therefore can foresee and foretell the destruction of their enemies. Thus David, and a greater than David, supported themselves in their troubles; and the church, with her children, must do likewise.

“ 6. I will freely sacrifice unto thee; I will praise thy name, O LORD, for *it is* good. 7. For he hath

delivered me out of all my trouble: and mine eye hath seen *his desire*, *Heb.* mine eye hath looked, upon mine enemies."

Saul, under the direction of the Ziphites, having encompassed David on every side, was suddenly called off to defend his country from an invasion of the Philistines; by which means David escaped, and "beheld his enemies" retreating. 1 Sam. xxiii. 27. For this event he offers the sacrifice of a heart freed from fear, and praises the name of his great Deliverer. Christians should follow his example; they should consider, how great things God hath done for them, and should never suffer the voice of praise and thanksgiving to cease in the church of the redeemed. Beautiful and emphatical will these two concluding verses appear, when conceived as proceeding from the mouth of our Lord, upon his resurrection. And we hope one day to repeat them, on a like occasion, saying, each in his own person; "I will freely sacrifice unto thee; I will praise thy name, O Lord, for it is good. For he hath delivered me out of all my trouble, and mine eye hath looked upon mine enemies."

PSALM LV.

ARGUMENT.—David, as it is supposed, when driven out of Jerusalem by the rebellion of Absalom, and in danger of being suddenly cut off, 1—8. maketh his prayer to God, and describeth the sorrowful state of his soul; 9—11. entreateth that the iniquitous counsels of the rebels may be divided and confounded; 12—14. upbraideth Ahithophel, the Judas of those times, with his foul treason; 15—19. foretelleth the tragical end of faction,

and his own re-establishment through faith in God, notwithstanding the base treachery of his favourite son and favourite servant.

“ 1. Give ear to my prayer, O God: and hide not thyself from my petition. 2. Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, *Heb.* am dejected in my meditation, and make a noise, *Heb.* am in a violent, tumultuous agitation, as the waves of the sea.”

In the person of David, driven from his throne, and put in fear of his life, by Absalom and Ahithophel, we here behold our blessed Redeemer, on the day of his sufferings, praying earnestly, and repeating his supplications, as in the garden of Gethsemane, at the prospect of that sea of sorrows which was then about to overwhelm his agonizing soul. In all our afflictions, he was afflicted: in all his afflictions, let us be so.

“ 3. Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.”

O my God, how can we repine and murmur at any oppression and calumny which we suffer from the world, when we see, not only thy servant David, but thy son Jesus, thus hated, slandered, and persecuted, by their own subjects, and their own children?

“ 4. My heart *is* sore pained within me; and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. 5. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.”

These words describe the state of David's mind, when he went over the brook Cedron, and up mount Olivet, "weeping as he went," and expecting speedily to be cut off: 2 Sam. xv. 23, 30. they describe the agony of the Son of David, when he likewise went over the same brook Cedron, John xviii. 1. at the time of his passion, when his soul was "sore amazed and very heavy, and exceeding sorrowful, even unto death:" Mark xiv. 33, 34. and every man will too surely find them applicable to himself, if not often before, yet certainly, in the day when the king of terrors shall draw up all his forces in array against him.

"6. And I said, O that I had wings like a dove! *for then* would I fly away, and be at rest. 7. Lo, *then* would I wander far off, *and* remain in the wilderness. 8. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm *and* tempest."

The calamitous situation of the Israelitish monarch forced from him a wish, that, like the bird of innocence and peace, he could in a moment banish himself from the distractions of his rebellious kingdom, and enjoy, in holy solitude, that repose which his sceptre and his guards were not able to procure him. There are few crowned heads, perhaps, which have not more than once found occasion to form, if not to utter, a wish of the same nature. Much more must it have been the wish of the King of Israel, whose crown was literally one of thorns; and it often will be the wish of the devout Christian, who, sensible of the sins and follies that overspread the earth, is taught to aspire after his heavenly country, and to

delight in that resemblance of it which the closet best affords.

“9. Destroy, O LORD, *and* divide their tongues, for I have seen violence and strife in the city.”

In these words, King David beseecheth God to divide, confound, and bring to nothing, the counsels of the iniquitous and rampant faction; for so, in the history, we find him saying, “O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness:” 2 Sam. xv. 31. The royal prayer was heard; the counsel of Ahithophel was overthrown by Hushi, and the disappointed traitor became his own executioner. The treason of Judas, against the Son of David, brought him likewise to the same end. Every one, who finds himself tempted to betray the cause of his prince, or his Saviour, should set these two examples before his eyes.

“10. Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof; mischief also and sorrow *are* in the midst of it. 11. Wickedness *is* in the midst thereof; deceit and guile depart not from her streets.”

The violence and strife, mentioned at the conclusion of the preceding verse, are here described as going their rounds, like an armed watch, upon the walls, to guard rebellion, which had taken up its residence in the heart of the city, from the attacks of loyalty, right, and justice, driven with the king beyond Jordan. Thus from the same city was righteousness afterwards expelled, in the person of the King of righteousness, and nothing left, but “mischief, and sorrow, wickedness, deceit, and guile,” encompassed with a guard of “violence and strife.”

Whether the state of the Gentile Christian church, in the last days, will not too much resemble that of Jerusalem before its destruction, is a matter of sad and sorrowful consideration.

“ 12. For *it was* not an enemy *that* reproached me, then I could have borne *it*; neither *was it* he that hated me, *that* did magnify *himself* against me, then I would have hid myself from him. 13. But *it was* thou, a man mine equal, my guide, *Heb.* my disciple, and mine acquaintance. 14. We took sweet counsel together, *and* walked unto the house of God in company.”

The many aggravating circumstances of Ahithophel's treason against David, and that of Judas against Christ, are here strongly marked. The treachery of pretended friends is generally to the church, as it was to her Lord, the beginning of sorrows. Ingratitude, malice, and falsehood, are ingredients that must always meet in the composition of a traitor.

“ 15. Let death seize upon them, *or*, death shall remove, *or*, take them away, *and* let them, *or*, they shall, go down quick into hell: for wickedness *is* in their dwellings, and among them.”

In these words is predicted the tragical fate of Ahithophel, and those who followed Absalom; of Judas and the Jews; and of all, who shall resemble them in wickedness. The sudden destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who, for stirring up a rebellion against Moses and Aaron, “went down alive into the pit,” seems here alluded to, as the

grand representation of the manner in which the bottomless pit shall one day shut her mouth for ever upon all the impenitent enemies of the true King of Israel, and the great High-Priest of our profession.

“ 16. As for me, I will call upon God, and the LORD shall save me. 17. Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice.”

Prayer is the believer's universal medicine for all the disorders of the soul within, and his invincible shield against every enemy that can attack him from without. “ Morning, Evening, and Noon,” were three of the hours of prayer in the Jewish church. We find holy Daniel observing them in Babylon, notwithstanding the royal decree, which made it death for him so to do. The event fully justified him, and showed the power of true devotion, whose high prerogative it still is, to save the righteous from the mouth of THE LION. See Dan. vi. 10, 22. 2 Tim. iv. 17. 1 Pet. v. 8.

“ 18. He hath delivered, *or*, shall deliver my soul in peace from the battle *that was*, *or*, is, against me; for there were, *or*, are, many with me.”

David was delivered in peace, when, after having suppressed the rebellion, he was brought back in triumph to his capital; the Son of David was delivered in peace, when, victorious over the enemies of man's salvation, he arose from the dead, and returned to the Jerusalem above; the believing soul is delivered in peace, when her sins are forgiven, and her corruptions mortified; and the bodies of the saints shall

be delivered in peace, at the resurrection of the just. The ground of all these deliverances is one and the same—"They that are with us are more than they that are against us:" 2 Kings vi. 16. "Greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world." 1 John iv. 4.

"19. God shall hear, and afflict, or humble, them, even he that abideth of old. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God; *or*, because they will not be converted, and fear God."

He who inhabiteth eternity, remaining unchangeably the same, from everlasting to everlasting, hath determined to hear the prayers of his faithful servants, and finally to humble the pride of his unrepenting adversaries. These are the decrees which he hath thought fit to promulgate; and on them we may safely depend.

"20. He hath put forth his hand against such as be, *or*, were, at peace with him; he hath broken his covenant."

The prophet goes on to describe the perfidy of traitors, like Ahithophel and Judas. Every wilful and malicious sinner "puts forth his hand against" the person who is "at peace with him," nay, who "made his peace" with the Father; and, by so doing, "breaketh the covenant" into which by baptism he was admitted. O blessed Jesus, how often do we betray thee to thine enemies, our own lusts, and consider it not!

"21. *The words* of his mouth were smother

than butter, but war *was* in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet *were* they drawn swords."

Of this complexion are the cant of hypocrites, the charity of bigots and fanatics, the benevolence of atheists, the professions of the world, the allurements of the flesh, and the temptations of Satan, when he thinks proper to appear in the character of an angel of light.

"22. Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

The conclusion of the whole matter is, that amidst all dangers and adversities, whensoever they oppress us, we are to put our full trust and confidence only in his mercy, who delivered David, and the Son of David, out of all their troubles. He, who once bore the burden of our sorrows, requested of us, that we would now and ever permit him to bear the burden of our cares; that, as he knoweth what is best for us, he may provide it accordingly. When shall we trust Christ to govern the world which he hath redeemed?

"23. But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee."

O terrible voice of most just judgment, pronounced against rebels and murderers! Of the sure and certain execution of his righteous sentence who can

doubt, that considers the fate of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; of Absalom, Ahithophel, and Judas; and, above all, of the city which contained within its walls those rebels, and murderers of the Son of God? Let us trust for ever in Him alone who can thus deliver, and thus destroy.

PSALM LVI.

Eleventh Day.—Morning Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—David, in danger with the Philistines, among whom he was driven, as well as from Saul and his associates, is supposed to, 1, 2. make supplication to God, in whom, 3, 4. he placeth all his hope and confidence, 5—7. of being saved from the wiles and stratagems of the adversary; 8, 9. he comforteth himself with the consideration that God taketh account of his sufferings, and will appear on his behalf; 10, 11. he repeateth the declaration of his faith in the divine promises; and, 12, 13. concludeth with paying his tribute of praise and thanksgiving. What David was in Philistia, the disciples of the Son of David are in the world.

“ 1. Be merciful unto me, O God; for man would swallow me up: he fighting daily oppresseth me. 2. Mine enemies would daily swallow *me* up, for *they be* many that fight against me, O thou Most High.”

The same words are applicable to the situation and circumstances of David, pursued by his enemies: of Christ, persecuted by the Jews; of the church, afflicted in the world; and of the soul, encompassed by enemies, against whom she is forced to wage perpetual war.

“ 3. What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. 4. In God I will praise, *or*, glorify in, his word, in God I have put my trust ; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.”

Whoever, like the prophet Elisha's servant, beholdeth only the forces of the enemy, will be apt, like him, to cry out, “ Alas, my master ! how shall we do ? ” 2 Kings vi. 15. But when our eyes are “ opened,” to see those “ horses and chariots of fire ” which are “ round about us ; ” when we perceive the promises of the Word, and the mighty succours of the Spirit, which are all on our side ; we no longer fear the terrors or the temptations of flesh and blood ; but find ourselves enabled to do, and to suffer, all things, through faith in him who strengtheneth us to the battle. “ He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee ; ” so that we may boldly say, “ the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

“ 5. Every day they wrest my words : all their thoughts *are* against me for evil. 6. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.”

These words could not be more literally descriptive of the behaviour of David's persecutors, than they certainly are of that conduct which the Scribes and Pharisees observed towards our blessed Lord ; when, like serpents by the way-side, they “ marked his steps,” till a proper opportunity offered, to dart from their lurking-place, and “ bruise his heel.” We think it hard, when men use us in this manner ; but

surely we either forget that the Son of God was so used before us, or that we are his disciples.

“7. Shall they escape by iniquity? In *thine* anger cast down the people, O God.”

The signal vengeance inflicted on the enemies of David, of Christ, and of the church, in different ages, may serve to convince us, that if we would “escape,” it must be from sin, not by it.

“8. Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: *are they* not in thy book?”

Known unto God are all the afflictions of his servants, while banished, like David, from their abiding city and country, they “wander” here below, in the land of their pilgrimage. The “tears” of penitents are had in remembrance, and, as so many precious gems, will one day adorn their crowns. How dear, then, in the sight of God, were the “wanderings” and the “tears” of the holy Jesus, submitting to perform penance for those sins which he never committed!

“9. When I cry *unto thee*, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God *is* for me.”

What can we possibly desire more, than this assurance, that, how many, or how formidable, soever our enemies may be, yet there is one always ready to appear in our defence, whose power no creature is able to resist? “This I know,” saith David; and had we the faith of David, we should know it too.

“10. In God will I praise *his* word: in the LORD will I praise *his* word. 11. In God have I put my trust; I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.

See above, on verse 4. 12. Thy vows *are* upon me, O God; I will render praises unto thee. 13. For thou hast delivered my soul from death; *wilt not thou deliver* my feet, *or*, my feet also, *or*, assuredly, from falling, that I may walk before God, in the light of the living.”

At the conclusion of this Psalm, and of many others, the prophet speaketh of his deliverance as actually accomplished; he acknowledgeth himself under the obligation of the vows made to God in the night of affliction, which he is resolved to pay on the morning of triumph and jubilee. O come that glorious morning, when the redeemed shall sing eternal praises to the Lord God of their salvation, for having “delivered their souls from death, and their feet from falling, that they may walk before him, in the light of the living!”

PSALM LVII.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm is said to have been composed by David, on occasion of his escape from Saul, in the cave at Engedi. See 1 Sam. xxiv. 3. And the church, by her appointment of it as one of the proper Psalms for Easter-day, hath instructed us to transfer the ideas to the resurrection of Christ from the grave. The Psalm containeth, 1—3. an act of faith in the promises; 4. a description of grievous sufferings; 5. a prayer for the exaltation of God’s glory, which is repeated again at the conclusion; 6. a prediction of judgment on the adversary; 7—10. a strain of the highest exultation and jubilee.

“1. Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me, for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the

shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until *these* calamities be overpast."

David, encompassed by his enemies at Engedi, putteth up this prayer to God; the same prayer we may suppose to have been used by our blessed Lord, when drawing near to the grave, and gate of death: and the church ever continueth the use of it, until she be delivered from the bondage of corruption. In the mean time, she teacheth her children to put themselves, living and dying, under the protection of him who is always ready to "gather them, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." There they may rest in peace and security.

"2. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth *all things* for me."

David cried unto God, and was delivered out of the hand of Saul; the Son of David cried unto God, and was delivered from the power of the grave: the saints on earth cry unto God, and shall be delivered out of their troubles; the souls under the altar in heaven cry unto God, Rev. vi. 10. and shall obtain a re-union with their bodies. Thus God "performeth all things for us," as well as for David.

"3. He shall send from heaven, and save me *from* the reproach of him that would swallow me up. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth."

We have all an enemy, who would "swallow us up:" and we look for the manifestation of the divine "mercy and truth" from "heaven," for the salvation of our souls, and the redemption of our bodies. A

grand specimen of this manifestation was exhibited to the world, on that glorious morning when Jesus Christ arose from the dead.

“4. My soul *is* among lions: *and* I lie *even* among them that are set on fire, *even* the sons of men, whose teeth *are* spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.”

The fiercest of beasts, the most devouring of elements, and the sharpest of military weapons, are selected, to represent the power and fury of David's enemies. How much stronger and more furious, were the enemies of Christ, who, in the day of his passion, resembled Daniel in the Lion's den, the three children in the fiery furnace, and who stood alone, exposed to the assaults of men and evil spirits!

“5. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; *let* thy glory *be* above all the earth.”

God is exalted and glorified among men by the display of mercy and judgment, in the salvation of his children from the hands of their enemies. But chiefly was he exalted, when, having raised up his Son Jesus, he set him at his own right hand, far above all principalities and powers, and every thing that is named in heaven and in earth. This was the great exaltation, prefigured, foretold, and incessantly prayed for, in the ancient church.

“6. They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen, *or*, shall fall *themselves*.”

David compares himself, 1 Sam. xxvi. 20. to a bird upon the mountains, which the fowler endeavoureth to hunt into the nets and snares set up and prepared for its destruction. So was the most innocent dove, the holy Jesus, persecuted by the Jews, until they had driven him into the snares of death, and laid him low in the grave. But the enemies of both received, in the end, the due reward of their deeds, and “fell into the pit they had digged.”

“7. My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise.”

At the prospect of approaching deliverance, the prophet, in the person of Christ, declareth his heart to be fixed and established, steadfast and unmoveable in the midst of trouble, even then preparing to celebrate its future enlargement with songs of praise.

“8. Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I *myself* will awake early, *or*, awaken the morning.”

For this purpose, he calls upon his tongue, with all his instruments of music, all the organs of the body and affections of the soul, to unite their powers in sweetest harmony and concert, and to awaken the sluggish morning with the voice of melody, sounding forth the glories of redemption. Thus should the morning be ever celebrated, on which Christ “arose from the dead, and became the first-fruits of them that slept.”

“9. I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people; I will sing unto thee among the nations. 10. For

thy mercy *is* great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds."

The resurrection of Jesus from the grave, foreshadowed in the deliverance of David from the hand of Saul, was a transaction which caused the heavens, and all the powers therein, to extol the mercy and the truth of God. The nations of the earth, whose are the benefits and the blessings of that transaction, are, therefore, bound evermore to make it the subject of their praises and thanksgivings; which is done by the members of our church, every Easter-day, in the words of this very Psalm.

" 11. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: *let* thy glory be above all the earth."

Even so, be thou still exalted, O blessed Jesus! above the heavens, while the angels sing their hallelujahs on high; and let thy glory be above all the earth, while, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, the congregation of the redeemed incessantly magnify thy salvation below.

The church triumphant, and the church below,
In songs of praise their present union show;
Their joys are full, our expectation long;
In life we differ, but we join in song.
Angels and we, assisted by this art,
May sing together, though we dwell apart.

WALLER on Divine Poesie.

PSALM LVIII.

ARGUMENT.—In the persons of Saul and his iniquitous counsellors, the enemies of Christ and the church, 1, 2. are reproved, and, 3—5. their malice is described, by comparing it

to the poison of serpents, which are proof against every art made use of to tame them : 6—9. the destruction of the wicked is foretold and illustrated by six similitudes ; 10. the triumph of the righteous is likewise predicted ; as also, 11. the effect it will produce, in manifesting to all the world the providence and glory of God.

“ 1. Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation ? Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men ? 2. Yea, in heart ye work wickedness ; ye weigh the violence of your hands, *or*, your hands frame violence, in the earth.”

The proceedings of Doeg, and other associates of Saul, against David ; those of Judas and the Sanhedrim against our Lord ; and those of wicked princes, and court sycophants, in different ages, against the faith and the church ; as they spring from the same principles, so they flow pretty much in the same channel. Such men may here see their characters drawn, and their end foretold.

“ 3. The wicked are estranged from the womb : they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.”

The tares sown by the enemy, in human nature, appear early ; and show us how far we are “ estranged ” from original truth and righteousness. What can be expected, unless grace and discipline prevent it, but that “ out of the serpent’s root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.”

“ 4. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent ; *they are* like the deaf adder *that* stoppeth her ear :

5. Which will not hearken to the voice of charm-ers, charming never so wisely."

The wicked are here compared to serpents, for that malignity in their tempers which is the venom and poison of the intellectual world. And whereas there are some kinds even of serpents, which, by musical sounds, may, for a time, as it is said, be disarmed of their rage, and rendered so tame as to be handled without danger;* yet the evil dispositions of some men, like those of one particular species of the serpentine race, are often invincible. The enmity of a Saul, was proof against the heavenly strains of the son of Jesse; and He, who spake as "never man spake," was stung to death by "a generation of vipers."

"6. Break, *or*, thou wilt break, their teeth, O

* Bochart quotes several ancient authors, who mention this effect of music, and among them Virgil, *Æneid*, vii. v. 753.

"Vipereo generi, et graviter spirantibus hydri
Spargere qui somnos CANTUQUE manuque solebat."

The elder Scaliger, as quoted by the same learned critic, writes thus: "Nos aliquando vidimus cantationibus e cavernis exciri serpentes:" and Mr. Boyle, in his *Essay on the Great Effects of Languid Motion*, p. 71, ed. 1685, gives us the following passage, from Sir H. Blunt's *Voyage into the Levant*, p. 81, edit. 5. "Many rarities of living creatures I saw in Grand Cairo; but the most ingenious was a nest of four-legged serpents, of two feet long, black and ugly, kept by a Frenchman; who, when he came to handle them, they would not endure him, but ran and hid in their hole; then would he take his cittern, and play upon it; they, hearing his music, came all crawling to his feet, and began to climb up him, till he gave over playing; then away they ran." The "deaf" adder may either be a serpent of a species naturally deaf (for several such kinds are mentioned by Avicenne, as quoted by Bochart) or one deaf by accident: in either case, she may be said, in the language of poetry, to "stop her ear," from her being proof to all the efforts of the charmer. MERRICK.

God, in their mouths; break, *or*, thou wilt break, out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD."

The destruction of the wicked is represented under six similitudes. The first is that of breaking the teeth of lions, being the most terrible weapons of the most terrible animals. But what is human power, at its highest exaltation, if compared to that of God? The mountains of Gilboa can tell us, the desolated Zion can inform us, how the mighty are fallen, and the weapons of war perished! because the mighty had exalted themselves, and the weapons of war had been lifted up against truth and innocence, protected by the decrees of heaven.

"7. Let them, *or*, they shall, melt away *as* waters, *which* run continually, *or*, pass away; *when* he bendeth *his bow to shoot* his arrows, let them, *or*, they shall, be as cut in pieces."

The second similitude used to illustrate the destruction of the wicked, is that of torrents and inundations, which descend with great noise from the mountains, and cover the face of a country; but their cause soon ceasing to act, they run off and appear no more; herein affording a fine emblem of the weakness and instability of earthly power. The impotence of human efforts against divine counsels is compared, thirdly, to a man drawing a bow, when the arrow on the string is broken in two; and therefore, instead of flying to the mark, falls useless at his feet.

"8. As a snail *which* melteth, let *every one of them* pass away; *like* the untimely birth of a woman, *that* they may not see the sun. *Or*, As a melting

snail, he shall pass away; as an abortion, they see not the sun."

A snail, which, coming forth of his shell, marks his path with slime, continually losing some part of his substance in his progress; and an abortion, which consumes away in the like manner: these are the fourth and fifth images, selected to represent the transient nature of worldly greatness, still wasting, till it comes to nothing; and the miserable fate of those who perish, with their half-formed devices, nor ever behold the Sun of Righteousness.

"9. Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in *his* wrath; or, he shall take them away alive, as with a whirlwind in *his* wrath."

Wicked men have, in common with others, that tendency to decay, which is entailed on the world, and on all things therein; but they are warned, by this sixth and last similitude, to prevent the judgments of the Almighty. These often break forth like a whirlwind, or a thunder-storm, and sweep away at once, in the flower of their strength, and the height of their prosperity, the tyrannical oppressors of the people of God; whose short-lived glory, and sudden extinction, are aptly resembled to that crackling and momentary blaze which is produced by a fire, kindled among thorns, under a pot.

"10. The righteous shall rejoice, when he seeth the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked: 11. So that a man shall say, Verily,

there is a reward for the righteous: verily, he is, or, there is, a God that judgeth in the earth."

The victories of that Just One, gained in his own person, and in those of his faithful servants, over the enemies of man's salvation, are productive of a joy, which springeth not from love of revenge, but is inspired by a view of the divine mercy, justice, and truth, displayed in the redemption of the elect, the punishment of the ungodly, and the accomplishment of the promises. Whoever duly weigheth and considereth these things, will diligently seek after the reward of righteousness, and humbly adore the providence, which ordereth all things aright, in heaven and earth.

PSALM LIX.

Eleventh Day.—Evening Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm is said to have been composed on occasion of David's escape, when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him. See 1 Sam. xix. 11—18. David in these, as in many other circumstances of his life, may be considered as the representative of Messiah, 1, 2. praying to be delivered from the power of his blood-thirsty enemies, whose indefatigable malice, he, 3—7. describes: but, 8—10. predicts his own enlargement through the tender mercy and mighty power of God; as also, 11—15. the singular vengeance to be poured out upon his enemies, for their punishment, and the admonition of others. The Psalm concludes with a strain of exultation and thanksgiving.

“ 1. Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God; defend me, *Heb.* exalt me, from them that rise up

against me. 2. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men.”

In these words, we hear the voice of David, when a prisoner in his own house; the voice of Christ, when surrounded by his merciless enemies; the voice of the church, when under bondage in the world; and the voice of the Christian, when under temptation, affliction, and persecution.

“ 3. For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul; the mighty are gathered against me; not *for* my transgression, nor *for* my sin, O LORD. 4. They run and prepare themselves without *my* fault; awake to help me, and behold.”

The mighty men of Saul were gathered against David, who had been guilty of no offence against the king, and therefore was, so far, innocent. The Jews and Romans were gathered against Jesus Christ, who had committed no sin at all, and was perfectly innocent. And the world is oftentimes in arms against the children of God, only for doing what it is their duty to do. In all such cases, God is to be applied to, as the helper and avenger of those who suffer unjustly.

“ 5. Thou, therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake, *or*, thou shalt awake, to visit all the heathen: be not merciful, *or*, thou wilt not be merciful, to any wicked transgressors.”

The prophet, in this verse, seemeth to respect that great day of final retribution, which is to suc-

ceed the day of grace, the accepted time of repentance and pardon. For then it is that Jehovah shall awake, to judge the nations; to reward every man according to his deeds; and to banish for ever, from his presence, the impenitent workers of iniquity. The malicious adversaries of David, and those of the Son of David, may not then find the mercy so often by them rejected, in the days of their flesh.

“ 6. They return at evening; they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.”

The emissaries of Saul, coming after David in the “ evening,” besetting his house, and blocking up the avenues, are compared to a set of hungry bloodhounds in quest of their prey. But the picture is drawn likewise for that herd of evening wolves who thirsted after the blood of the Lamb of God, on whom their mouths were opened, crying, “ Crucify him ! crucify him !”

“ 7. Behold, they belch, *or*, spout, out with their mouth; swords *are* in their lips, for who, *say they*, doth hear ?”

Out of the abundance of malice in the heart, the mouth will speak, like the cutting of a sword; and the wicked take counsel against the just, as if there were no one above who heard and regarded.

“ 8. But thou, O LORD, shall laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.”

These very expressions are used in the 4th verse of the 2d Psalm, to denote the futility of all the counsels entered into, by Jew and Gentile, against

Messiah and his church. The Psalm before us seems evidently to relate to the same counsels, against the same blessed Person, whatever part of king David's history might be the occasion of its being composed.

“ 9. *Because of his strength* will I wait upon thee; for God *is* my defence, *or*, exaltation. 10. The God of my mercy shall prevent me; God shall let me see *my desire*, *Heb.* look, upon mine enemies.”

To the strength of the adversary, the Psalmist opposeth that of God, which he foresaw would rescue him, and avenge his cause. In all our troubles let us do likewise; and then, he who exalted David, and a greater than David, will in due time exalt us, and we shall look, without fear, upon our spiritual enemies.

“ 11. Slay them not, lest my people forget; scatter them by thy power, and bring them down, O LORD, our shield. *Or*, Thou wilt not slay them—thou wilt scatter them,” &c.

The prophet, in the person of Messiah, predicteth the singular fate of the Jews; who, for their sins, were not extirpated, lest the Gentile Christians should “forget” their punishment, but were “scattered” among all nations, and degraded from the glorious privileges of that high rank in which they once stood.* Thus doth that people remain, at this day;

* Prophetice, Christiani divinæ ultionis oblivisci non possunt, dum Judæi, excidio suo superstites, et ubique vagi, pœnam suam, et pariter, in testimonium, eloquia divina circumferunt. BOSSUET.

a monument of God's vengeance against apostacy; a beacon, set up, and kindled by the hand of heaven, as a warning to all Christian churches, that they split not on the same fatal rock.

“ 12. *For* the sin of their mouth, *and* the words of their lips, let them, *or*, they shall even be taken in their pride: and for cursing and lying *which* they speak.”

The causes of the Jews' dispersion are here assigned, namely, “the sin of their mouth” in the “words of their lips,” or their “hard speeches,” spoken against the Son of God; their slanders, lying accusations, and outrageous blasphemies, together with that horrid imprecation in which they involved their descendants; who have groaned under the weight of it for near these 1700 years, and yet still continue to justify the deeds of their fathers, retaining that “pride” in their name, and long-since forfeited privileges, which provoked the Romans to destroy their city and country.

“ 13. Consume *them* in thy wrath, consume *them*, *or*, thou shalt consume *them*, &c. that they *may* not, *or*, shall not, *be*; and let them, *or*, they shall, know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth.”

This prediction was accomplished in the total subversion of Jerusalem by Titus, when the Jews having no longer any city, temple, or civil polity, ceased to “be,” as a nation. And they have seen enough to have convinced them, that God is the God “not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also.” The

Gospel hath been preached, idolatry hath been overthrown, the nations have been converted to the faith of Abraham, and that of David, whose Psalms are used throughout the world; and God, who “ruled in Jacob, and was known in Jewry,” now is known and ruleth “unto the ends of the earth;” for they have “seen the salvation,” and submitted to the sceptre of king Messiah.

“14. And at evening let them, *or*, they shall, return; *and*, let them, *or*, they shall, make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. 15. Let them, *or*, they shall, wander up and-down for meat, and grudge, *or*, howl, if they be not satisfied.”

The punishment inflicted on the wicked often carries the mark of their crime. It is just that they who have thirsted after the blood of the righteous, should want a drop of water to cool their tongues; and the hunger of a dog is deservedly their plague, of whom a resemblance of that unclean animal's disposition hath been the sin. Such is the present condition of the Jews, excluded from the church, and suffering all the calamities of a spiritual famine; and such will be the condition of all those who are to wail and lament in vain, without the holy city, for evermore. Rev. xxii. 15.

“16. But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. 17. Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God *is* my defence, *and* the God of my mercy.”

While the wicked murmur and repine at the dispensations of Heaven, the righteous are employed in giving thanks and praises for the same; and the “morning” which is to consign the former to the habitations of despair, where no sounds are heard but those of hideous wailings and horrid blasphemies, shall transport the latter to the mansions of felicity, resounding with incessant hallelujahs.

PSALM LX.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm is thought to have been composed by David, when after his coming to the throne, the tribes of Israel had submitted to his sceptre, and he was engaged in the reduction of the adjacent countries. See the history, 2 Sam. chap. v. and viii. 1—3. He describes what Israel had lately suffered from foreign enemies, and domestic feuds; 4, 5, 6. he declareth himself appointed to conduct his people to victory and triumph, according to a divine prediction; 6, 7. he rejoiceth in the accession of the other tribes to that of Judah, and 8—12. sees Edom, Moab, and Philistia, already subdued by the mighty power of God. All this is now to be spiritually applied, in the Christian church, to the establishment and enlargement of Messiah’s kingdom, prefigured by that of David.

“1. O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again.”

When the church, by her sins, hath rejected God, she is rejected by him; she is delivered into the hands of her enemies, and suffers persecution: when, by repentance and supplication, she returneth to him, he is ready to meet and receive her. The history of

Israel is one continued exemplification of these most interesting truths. It should be the care and endeavour of every church, and every individual, to profit thereby.

“ 2. Thou hast made the earth, *or*, the land, to tremble; thou hast broken it; heal the breaches thereof, for it shaketh.”

The persecutions of the Israelitish church often shook the “land” of promise; the persecutions of the Christian church have frequently moved the whole earth. Afflictions of this kind may be likened to wounds sometimes made in a diseased body, by skilful surgeons, to be healed again, when, by a discharge of the corrupt humours, they have answered the end for which they were intended.

“ 3. Thou hast showed thy people hard things; thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment, *or*, intoxication.”

The Israelites had not only suffered “hard things” from their professed enemies the Philistines, by the overthrow of Saul and his army, but their civil dissensions at home showed that they had drunk deep of the bitter cup of infatuation. See 1 Sam. xxxi. and 2 Sam. ii. and iii. From these two sources flow the calamities of churches and of kingdoms in all ages, whensoever it pleaseth God to visit their transgressions upon them by the instrumentality of men.

“ 4. Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth.”

For the temporal salvation of Israel, God raised up David, according to his promise; to whose standard, as a centre of unity, the worshippers of the true God might resort. For the spiritual and eternal salvation of the church, God raised up his Son Jesus, according to his promise, and “displayed the banner of the cross,” under which believers are enlisted, and led on to triumph, “because of the truth.” Remarkable to this purpose are the words of Isaiah; “In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest,” after the battle is over, and the victory gained, “shall be glorious.” Isaiah xi. 10.

“5. That thy beloved may be delivered, save *with* thy right hand, and hear me.”

This prayer, which king David preferred for Israel, the great Intercessor prefers continually for his church; and all ought to prefer for themselves and for others.

“6. God hath spoken in his holiness, *or*, by his Holy One; I will rejoice, *or*, exult, *that is*, as a conqueror: I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.”

As a ground of hope and confidence, David here declares, that God, by the mouth of a holy prophet, had spoken and promised him the successes for which he prayed in the foregoing verse. And that this was known among the people, appears from a speech of Abner to the elders of Israel, 2 Sam. iii. 18. “The LORD hath spoken of David, saying,

By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies." Having, therefore, mentioned this prediction, much of which was already accomplished, he exults as a conqueror, resolving to divide into districts, and portion out under proper officers, the country about Samaria, now become his own.

"7. Gilead *is* mine, and Manasseh *is* mine; Ephraim also *is* the strength of my head; Judah *is* my lawgiver."

"Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim," and the other tribes of Israel, upon the death of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, whom Abner had set over them, joined the royal tribe of Judah, and came in, with one accord, to the house of David. See 2 Sam. ii. 8. and v. 1. "Ephraim," as a tribe abounding in valiant men, is styled by its prince, "the strength of his head," or the support of his life and kingdom; and "Judah," as the seat of empire, replenished with men of wisdom and understanding, qualified to assist the throne by their salutary counsels, is dignified with the title of "lawgiver." Thus are the tribes of the spiritual "Israel" subject to Messiah, and serve him in various capacities, as the Spirit furnishes different men with different powers: some being endued with zeal and fortitude, to labour and suffer; others with knowledge and discretion, to instruct and govern.

"8. Moab *is* my wash-pot; over Edom will I cast out, *or*, extend, my shoe; Philistia, triumph thou

because of me; *Heb.* over Philistia give a shout of triumph. *The parallel passage, Ps. cviii. 9. has it—*Over Philistia I will give a shout of triumph.”

After having mentioned the submission of the Israelitish tribes to his sceptre, David predicts the extension of his kingdom over the neighbouring nations, those inveterate enemies of the people of God; such as the Moabites, the Edomites, and, above all, the Philistines. The absolute reduction of these nations under his dominion, is expressed metaphorically, by the phrases of “making them his washpot, and extending his shoe, that is, setting his foot,” upon them. The Son of David also must “reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.” 1 Cor. xv. 25. And the Christian, in these words, now declareth his hope of being enabled to do the same; to conquer through his Lord, and to triumph with him.

“9. Who will bring me *into* the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom?”

Bozrah, the capital of Idumea, *or*, “Edom,” was a fortified town, situated on a rock, deemed impregnable. See Obad. ver. 3. Considering therefore the strength of the adversary, David, by this question, acknowledgeth his own impotency, and the need he had of superior aid, in order to achieve this important conquest. How great need, then, have we of an Almighty Saviour, who may enable us to overcome our last and strongest enemy, death? And it is very remarkable, that Christ’s victory over this very enemy is set forth, by the prophet Isaiah, under the striking image of a king of Israel, re-

turning in triumph from the reduction of Idumea. “Who is this that cometh “from Edom,” with dyed garments from Bozrah?” &c. Isa. lxiii. 1. The reader will be no less entertained than instructed, by a discourse of Bishop Andrews on this subject, being the seventeenth of his Sermons on Easter-day.

“10. *Wilt* not thou, O God, *which* hadst cast us off? and *thou*, O God, *which* didst not go out with our armies?”

The question in the last verse, “Who will bring me into Edom?” is here answered by another question, “*Wilt* not thou, O God,” &c. that is, To whom can we have recourse, for assistance, but to thee, O God? Deserted by thee, we fall; but do thou go forth with us, and we shall again rise superior to every enemy. So saith the Christian soldier: “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” “Thou hast overcome the sharpness of death, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.”

“11. Give us help from trouble; for vain *is* the help of man. 12. Through God we shall do valiantly; for he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.”

David, like a wise and pious prince, acknowledgeth the weakness of the fleshly arm, and strengthened himself in the Lord his God. Much more ought we to confess the impotence of nature, and to implore the succours of grace; that so we may happily accomplish our spiritual warfare, tread Satan

under our feet, and triumph finally over the last enemy, death himself.

PSALM LXI.

ARGUMENT.—In the person of David, for a while driven into exile, and then restored to his kingdom, we here behold the church, or any member thereof, 1, 2, 3. preferring a petition for deliverance from the troubles and temptations of this mortal state; 4. 5. expressing faith and hope in God; 6, 7. praying for the prosperity and perpetuity of Messiah's kingdom; and, 8. resolving to praise God evermore for the same.

“ 1. Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. 2. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock *that* is higher than I.”

The church, extended far and wide among the nations, crieth aloud unto God, by the prayers of its members, even “from the end,” or utmost parts, “of the earth.” The world is to Christians a sea of troubles and temptations, from which they daily beseech God to deliver them, and to place them on the “rock” of their salvation; which rock is Christ. Grounded on him, by faith in his sufferings, and exaltation, we may defy all the storms and tempests that can be raised against us by the adversary, while, as from the top of a lofty mountain on the shore, we behold the waves dashing themselves in pieces beneath us.

“ 3. For thou hast been a shelter for me, *and* a strong tower from the enemy.”

Meditation on God our Saviour, as set forth in the Scriptures, will ever prove, to the believer, “a strong tower” or fortress, in which he will be safe from the darts of the enemy, and will be furnished with impregnable arguments, wherewith to oppose and blunt the force of every temptation which Satan can launch against his soul.

“4. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings.”

They who sojourn in the “tabernacle” of the church militant on earth, and continue faithful members of the same, shall take up their eternal residence in that permanent “temple,” the church triumphant in heaven. Below they are protected by the all-shadowing “wing” of God’s fatherly providence; above, they will be rewarded with the all-illuminating vision of his glorious presence.

“5. For thou, O God, hast heard my vows; thou hast given *me* the heritage of those that fear thy name.”

The “vows” of David, made during his banishment, were heard, and he was restored to the possession of his kingdom, in that land which God had given to his people, for a “heritage.” The vows of Messiah, made in the days of his pilgrimage, were heard, and he hath re-assumed his ancient throne in the heavenly Jerusalem. The prayers of the faithful, made in the land where they are in exile, are heard, and their spirits shall return to God, who will “give them the heritage of those that fear his name.”

“ 6. Thou wilt prolong the king’s life; *and* his years as many generations. 7. He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, *which* may preserve him. Or, 6. Thou wilt add days to the days of the king: his years as generation and generation. 7. He shall dwell before God for ever; mercy and truth shall preserve him.”

These words must be applied to Him, of whom it was said by the angel, “The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end:” Luke i. 32. The ancient church prayed for “his” exaltation and glory, under those of his representative: nay, the Chaldee paraphrast expounds this passage of Messiah only: “Thou shalt add days to the days of King Messias; his years shall be as the generation of this world, and of the world to come.” Nor can a better paraphrase be easily devised.

“ 8. So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.”

For the preservation and prosperity, the exaltation, the power, and the everlasting glory of Christ’s kingdom, with all the benefits and blessings thereof, we are bound to sing praise unto God’s holy name for ever, and daily to perform the vows made in baptism, that we would believe in him, and serve him, all the days of our life; until that blessed day shall dawn, which no night is to follow, when faith shall end in vision, and duty be resolved into praise.

PSALM LXII.

Twelfth Day.—Morning Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm containeth, 1, 2. a resolution to trust in God alone; 3, 4. a denunciation of judgment against the persecutors of the Just One; 5—7. a repeated act of faith, and resolution to trust in God, with, 8. an exhortation to all nations to do the same; and that, 9, 10. because there is no confidence to be placed in man, or in the world; but only, 11. in the divine power, and, 12. mercy.

“ 1. Truly my soul waiteth, *or*, resteth upon God: from him *cometh* my salvation.. 2. He only is my rock, and my salvation; *he is* my defence, *Heb.* high place; I shall not be greatly moved.”

David, in the midst of trouble, and perhaps tempted to have recourse to sinful expedients for his preservation, determines still to repose all his confidence on the promised mercy of him who is the “salvation,” the “rock,” and the “high place,” or fortress, of men. Christ would not be delivered from his sufferings, by any other means than those which the Father had ordained. The church, in like manner, should patiently wait for the salvation of God, and not attempt, through distrust of the divine mercy, to save herself by unwarrantable methods, of her own devising.

“ 3. How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? Ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall *shall ye be, and as a tottering fence.*”

From a declaration of his trust in God, the prophet passeth to an expostulation with his enemies, for

continually plotting against him; and foretelleth, that their destruction will happen suddenly and irremediably, like the downfall of a wall that is out of the perpendicular, or a stone fence, the parts of which are not cemented together. See Isa. xxx. 13. How striking is this expostulation, and this prediction, if considered as addressed by Messiah to his implacable enemies.

“ 4. They only consult to cast *him* down from his excellency; they delight in lies; they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.”

The adversaries of David “consulted” how to deprive him of those honours to which God designed to exalt him; the Scribes and Pharisees took counsel against Jesus, with the same intent; and to rob the Christian of the glory and immortality prepared for him, is the end of every temptation which the enemy throws in his way, whether it be of the terrifying, or, which oftener succeeds, the flattering, alluring, and deceiving kind.

“ 5. My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation *is* from him. 6. He only *is* my rock and my salvation; *he is* my defence, *or*, high place; I shall not be moved. 7. In God *is* my salvation, and my glory; the rock of my strength, *and* my refuge, *is* in God.”

The consideration suggested in the preceding verse, namely, that the enemy is ever intent upon our ruin, should stir us up, after the prophet's example to renew our faith, and strengthen ourselves yet more and more, continually, in the Lord our God, who alone giveth victory, salvation, and glory.

“ 8. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before him: God is a refuge for us.”

The comforts which David had found, he exhorteth others to seek, in faith and prayer; in such a faith as fixeth itself on God, when the whole world is against it; and such prayer, as poureth forth all the desires of the soul into the bosom of the Almighty. How often, in repeating the Psalms, do we declare, that “ God is our refuge;” yet how very seldom do we recur to him, as such, in the hour of temptation!

“ 9. Surely men of low degree *are* vanity, and men of high degree *are* a lie; to be laid in the balance, they *are* altogether *lighter* than vanity.”

A reason is here assigned, why we should at all times “ trust in God;” namely, because there is nothing else, in which we can trust, but it will in the end deceive us. Weighed in the “ balance” of heaven, the power of man to save, is “ less than nothing.” Let us weigh every thing in that exact and faithful balance.

“ 10. Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery; if riches increase, set not your heart *upon them.*”

Of all things here below, wealth is that on which poor deluded man is chiefly tempted, even to the end of life, to place his confidence; and when “ riches increase,” it proves a hard task for the human heart to keep its affections sufficiently detached from them. But he who by injustice acquireth the earthly mam-

mon, justly forfeiteth the treasures of heaven; and he who is made vain and covetous by money, however honestly gotten, renders that a curse to one, which was designed as a blessing to many, and drowns himself in the spring which should have watered all around him.

“11. God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this, *or*, these two things have I heard; that power *belongeth* unto God. 12. Also unto thee, O LORD, *belongeth* mercy; for thou renderest to every man according to his work.”

In opposition to the vain boasts of worldly men, trusting in their riches, &c. is cited the declaration of God, when, from mount Sinai, he proclaimed himself to be JEHOVAH, the fountain of all “power,” in heaven above, and on earth beneath, jealous of the glory of this attribute, ready to avenge himself on the wicked, and able to abase the pride of man. At the same time also, he proclaimed himself “the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin;” Exod. xxxiv. 6. To all mankind, therefore, the prophet here recommendeth meditation on these two most interesting subjects, the “power” of God to “punish sin, and his mercy” to pardon it. Fear of the former will beget desire of the latter, and both together will set a man upon doing works worthy of their parent faith; works, which God, of his infinite “mercy,” for the sake of Christ, has graciously promised to accept, and to “reward.”

PSALM LXIII.

ARGUMENT.—David, in the wilderness of Judah, expresseth, 1, 2. his longing desire after the presence of God, and the divine pleasures of the sanctuary; 3—6. he blesseth and praiseth God both day and night, in the midst of affliction, and, 7, 8. declareth his faith to be immoveable; 9, 10. he predicteth the fate of the wicked, with, 11. the exaltation, triumph, and glory of Messiah, to be exhibited in his own. The whole Psalm is applicable to the circumstances of Christ in the flesh, and to those of his people in the world.

“1. O God, thou *art* my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: 2. To see thy power and thy glory, so *as* I have seen thee in the sanctuary.”

After the example of the persecuted David in the wilderness of Judah, and that of the afflicted Jesus upon earth, the true Christian dedicates to God “the sweet hour of prime;” he opens the eyes of his understanding, together with those of his body, and awakes, each morning, to righteousness. He arises, with an inextinguishable thirst after those comforts which the world cannot give; and has immediate recourse, by prayer, to the fountain of the water of life; ever longing to behold the divine power and glory, in the sanctuary above, of which he has been favoured with some glimpse, in the services of the church below.

“3. Because thy loving-kindness *is* better than life, my lips shall praise thee.”

“Life” is the greatest of earthly blessings, all others being included in it; “all that a man hath,” saith Satan, “will he give for his life:” Job ii. 4. Not so the Psalmist. He knew a pearl of far greater price, namely, the “loving-kindness” of Jehovah, on which is suspended not only the life which now is, but that which is to come. The sense of this loving-kindness tuned the harp of the son of Jesse, and now tunes those of the spirits before the throne.

“4. Thus will I bless thee while I live; I will lift up my hands in thy name.”

“While we live,” however wretched our condition may be, we have an opportunity of obtaining pardon, grace, and glory; for which we ought, at all times, “to bless” God, “lifting up pure hands” in prayer, employing them in every good work, and all in the “name” of Jesus.

“5. My soul shall be satisfied as *with* marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise *thee* with joyful lips: 6. When I remember thee upon my bed, *and* meditate on thee in the *night-watches*.”

Solitude and stillness render the “night-watches” a fit season for meditation on the so often experienced mercies of God; which, when thus called to remembrance, become a delicious repast to the spirit, filling it with all joy, and peace, and consolation; giving songs in the night, and making darkness itself cheerful. How cheerful, then, will be that last morning, when the righteous, awaking up after the divine likeness, shall be “satisfied” with all the ful-

ness of God, and “praise him with joyful lips,” in those eternal courts, where there is no night, and from whence sorrow and sighing fly far away!

“7. Because thou hast been my help, therefore under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. 8. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.”

Recollection of past mercies inclines the soul to put herself under the “wing” of an all-shadowing Providence. Should her Redeemer, for a time, seem to be deserting her, faith constraineth her to “follow hard after him,” as a child doth after the father; and not to let go the “hand” which hath so often “upholden” her from falling.

“9. But those *that* seek my soul to destroy *it*, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. 10. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes.”

The enemies of Jehovah, and his Anointed, if they come not to a violent death, an early grave, or to have their carcasses devoured by the beasts of the field, (as hath sometimes been the case), yet in an after-state, their condition will certainly be deplorable. Their habitation must be in the “pit;” their punishment, the flaming “sword” of almighty vengeance; and their companions, those crafty and malicious ones, who, having contributed to seduce, will help to torment them.

“11. But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.”

If David found cause to rejoice in God, who gave him the victory over all his enemies; if the subjects of David might well glory in their king; if the slanderers of David were put to silence, at beholding him exalted to the throne of Israel; how much greater is the joy of Messiah in the Godhead, giving the manhood victory over his enemies, sin, death, and hell; how much rather may his subjects and worshippers glory in their triumphant King; and how much more shall the blasphemers of such a Saviour be everlastingly confounded, when they shall behold him invested with all the power and majesty of the Father, and seated on the throne of judgment! Surely, then, “the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.”

PSALM LXIV.

ARGUMENT.—David, in the person of Messiah, 1, 2. prayeth to be delivered from his enemies, from their counsels and insurrections; 3, 4. he describeth their calumnies and slanders, their scoffs and blasphemies, and, 5, 6. their indefatigable malice; predicting, 7—9. their astonishing fall, with, 10. the exaltation of the church, in God her Saviour.

“1. Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer; preserve my life from fear of the enemy.”

The prophet, after beseeching God to hear him, prefers his petition, which is, to be “preserved from fear of the enemy.” A petition of this kind is granted, either by a removal of the ground of fear, when the enemy’s power to hurt is taken from him, or his will changed; or else, by an extirpation of the fear it-

self, through the increase of faith, charity, and fortitude. For the former let us pray conditionally, "if it may be done, and if it is God's will that it should be done," as Christ prayed against the bitter cup in the garden; for the latter, we may pray absolutely; since a victory, gained by the fear of God over the fear of man, is a necessary step, and a happy prelude, to a full and final triumph over every enemy of our salvation.

"2. Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity."

The "counsels and insurrections" of the Israelites against David; of the same people, afterwards, against the Son of David; of worldly and wicked men against the church; and of the powers of darkness against us all, are here, respectively, understood to be deprecated.

"3. Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend *their bows to shoot* their arrows, *even* bitter words: 4. That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not."

In personal scoffings and revilings, the tongue performs the part of a "sword," which is a weapon that can be used only in open rencounters: but "bitter words," spoken in secret, and at a distance from him who is the subject of them, are like "arrows," which may be shot from an obscure and remote corner, and therefore cannot be warded off. The tongue, in both these capacities, was employed against that

perfect ONE, the holy Jesus, in the days of his flesh. Would to God it had never been since employed against him and his disciples, or by his disciples against each other!

“ 5. They encourage themselves *in* an evil matter; they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them?”

Sin doth not often appear abroad without a veil; and the more atrocious the sin, the more specious must be the pretence which is to cover it. Envy and malice crucified the Son of God; but, during the course of the proceedings against him, you hear only of zeal for the law, and loyalty to Cæsar. Such are the “snares,” set by the crafty, to deceive the simple and unwary; without considering that the broad eye of heaven, all the time, surveys their most secret devices, by which they impose upon others, and frequently upon themselves.

“ 6. They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search; both the inward *thought* of every one *of them*, and the heart, *is* deep.”

Truth and righteousness may be found, and practised, with half the pains that are often employed to “search out iniquity,” and establish error. The Jews could not accomplish the death of Christ, without counsels, stratagems, and subornations, “deep” and dark as hell itself: all which trouble they might have saved themselves at once, by believing on him. The case is the same with virtue and vice; and honesty is the readiest, as well as the best, policy.

“7. But God shall shoot at them *with* an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded. 8. So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away.”

While the enemies of the “Just One” were shooting in secret at him, he that dwelleth in the heavens was levelling an arrow at them, and one which would not fail to take place. It accordingly did so; and the direful imprecations of “their own tongues fell,” in unexampled vengeance, on the heads of them, and their children, who continued to justify the deeds of their fathers. All would “flee away” from the punishment of Jerusalem; let all, then, depart from the sins which occasioned it.

“9. And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing.”

It is remarkable, that the desolation of the once holy and beloved city filled “all men with fear” and astonishment, forcing them to acknowledge and “declare” it to be the “work of God.” Even Titus, the Roman emperor, confessed, that he had fought, and conquered, by the favour, and under the direction, of Heaven. O that men would “wisely consider” of this, and other wonderful works of the Almighty!

“10. The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.”

As sorrow, sooner or later, will be the portion of

Messiah's enemies, so joy is the high privilege of his friends and disciples. The "righteous" man alone can be truly "glad," because he alone can be glad "in the Lord" Jesus, the object of all his confidence. There was light in Goshen, when darkness covered the Egyptians; the Christian church drank the cup of salvation, when that of vengeance was mingled for Jerusalem; and when the empire of Satan shall fall, heaven will resound with hallelujahs.

PSALM LXV.

Twelfth Day.—Evening Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—In this very lovely song of Sion, the prophet treats, 1. of the praise due to Jehovah, for, 2. his mercy in hearing the prayers of his servants, and, 3. in redeeming them from their sins; 4. he declareth the blessedness of the elect in Christ their head; 5. predicteth the wonderful things which God would do for the salvation of men, by that power which, 6, 7. established the mountains, and confined the sea within its bounds; 8. foretelleth the conversion of the nations; and, 9—13. describeth the blessed effects of the Spirit poured out upon the church, under the figure of rain, descending upon a dry ground.

“ 1. Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed.”

The obligations of “praise and thanksgiving” were formerly offered, and all “vows” were paid, in the temple on mount “Sion.” At Jerusalem was performed the promise of man's redemption by the sacrifice of the Son of God; since which event, and the

call of the Gentiles, the Christian church has been the holy city and temple. In our communion, we are to offer up our devotions, and to perform the vow made in baptism; until we come to the heavenly Sion, to pay our vows, with the church triumphant, in everlasting hymns of praise.

“ 2. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.”

The prophet here foretells, that, on account of God's mercy, in hearing the prayers of his people, “flesh,” that is, all mankind, out of every nation, should “come” at his gracious call, and make their supplications before him in his church. And to whom should “all flesh come” but to him that “heareth prayer?”

“ 3. Iniquities prevail against me; *as for* our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.”

The chief subject of the prayers, made by all flesh to God, is the forgiveness of sin; in order to which it must be confessed. The verse, therefore, consisteth of two parts. First, an acknowledgment of guilt, “Iniquities prevail against me;” like whereunto is St. Paul's complaint, “O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from this body of death!” The second part of the verse intimates an assurance of pardon, through the blood of the Lamb. “As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away:” exactly corresponding to the answer, which the apostle returneth to himself; “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord:” Rom. vii. 25.

“ 4. Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach *unto thee*, that he may dwell in thy courts; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, *even* of thy holy temple.”

Blessed are they who are chosen out of the world, and admitted to the privileges of the church; still more blessed are they, who are chosen out of the congregation to stand continually in the presence of God, and to minister in his courts; but blessed above all blessing and praise, is the man Christ Jesus, elect, precious, chosen of God to be a high priest for ever; to make intercession for his people in the courts of heaven; that where he is, they may be also. Then shall we indeed be satisfied with the “pleasures of thy house, O Lord, *even* of thy holy temple.”

“ 5. *By* terrible, *or*, wonderful, things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; *who art* the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off *upon* the sea.”

The ancient church foretelleth, that God would “answer” her prayers for the coming of Messiah, “by wonderful things in righteousness;” which was brought to pass, by the death and resurrection of Christ, the overthrow of idolatry, and the conversion of the nations. Then “the God of salvation” became “the confidence of all the ends of the earth,” and the inhabitants of the most distant “island” believed in Jesus. By “wonderful things in righteousness,” will the prayers of the church, which now is, be answered at the second manifestation of the Son of God, in the glory of his Father.

“ 6. Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains *being* girded with power: 7. Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.”

That power which originally fixed the foundations of the “mountains,” and which, from time to time, controls the “waves” of the sea, is engaged in the support and preservation of the church; and will never suffer the “waves” of this troublesome world to overwhelm the “mountain of his holiness.”

“ 8. They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens; thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.”

The “tokens,” or signs, mentioned in this verse, are the exertions of divine power and mercy, called above, “wonderful things in righteousness;” which, at the publication of the Gospel, produced a saving “fear” of God among the nations, “dwelling in the uttermost parts of the earth.” “The isles,” saith Isaiah on the same occasion, “saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid; they drew near, and came:” Isa. xli. 5. And then it was, that “the outgoings of the morning and evening,” all the inhabitants of the earth, as many as experienced the sweet vicissitudes of day and night, of morning and evening, were “made to rejoice” in God their Saviour; whose name was praised, from the rising to the setting sun.

“ 9. Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, *which* is full of water: thou preparest them corn,

when thou hast so provided for it; *or*, for so thou hast established, *or*, constituted, it."

Under the beautiful image of a once barren and dry land, rendered fruitful by kindly showers of rain, turning dearth into plenteousness, are represented here (as in Isa. xxxv. and numberless other places) the gracious "visitation" of the church by the Spirit; the "riches" of grace and mercy, poured upon the hearts of men, from the exhaustless "river of God;" and the bountiful provision made thereby, for the relief of that spiritual famine which had been sore in all lands. See Isa. iv. 10. Rev. xxii. 1. Amos viii. 11.

"10. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof."

After the ground is ploughed up, the former rain, descending upon the "ridges," and into the "furrows," dissolveth the parts of the earth, and so fitteth it for the purposes of vegetation, whenever the seed shall be cast into it: then cometh the latter rain, to assist, and to "bless the springing" and increase thereof, unto a joyful harvest. Thus doth the good Spirit of God both prepare the hearts of his people for the reception of the word, and also enable them to bear fruit, bringing forth "some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty." Matt. xiii. 23.

"11. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths, *or*, clouds, *or*, heavens, drop fatness."

The herbs, fruits, and flowers, produced by the earth, are here finely represented, as a beautifully variegated “crown,” set upon her head, by the hands of her great Creator; at whose command, the heavens, by collecting and distilling the drops of rain, impregnate her, and make her the parent of terrestrial blessings. It is the same God who will crown with everlasting goodness the acceptable year, the year of his redeemed; when the Spirit shall have accomplished his work; when God shall be glorified in his saints; and heaven, as well as earth, shall be full of the goodness of Jehovah.

“12. They drop *upon* the pastures of the wilderness; and the little hills rejoice on every side; *or*, are girded about with gladness.”

As the rain, which descendeth from heaven, causeth even the barren wilderness to become a green pasture, and investeth the naked hills with the garments of joy and gladness; so the Spirit, when poured out from on high upon the Gentile world, converted that “wilderness” into a “fruitful field;” while the churches, there rising on all sides, like little fertile “hills, rejoiced” with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. See Isa. xxxii. 15. xxxv. 1, 2.

“13. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn: they shout for joy, they also sing.”

The happy effects of God’s visiting the earth with rain, are valleys covered with corn, verdant meads, and thriving flocks. All these ideas, in the prophetic Scriptures, are frequently transferred to the times

of refreshment and consolation, of peace and fruitfulness, in the church; which breaks forth into joy, in the one case, as the world is always ready to do, in the other. Manifold and marvellous, O Lord, are thy works, whether of nature or of grace; surely, in wisdom and loving kindness hast thou made them all; the earth, in every sense, is full of thy riches!

PSALM LXVI.

ARGUMENT.—In this Psalm the prophet, 1, 2. exciteth all the world to sing the praises of God; 3, 4. the power and universality of his kingdom; 5—12. the deliverance of the church from various afflictions and temptations; for which, 13, 15. we are to offer the sacrifices which had been vowed; 16—19. to declare the mercies and loving-kindnesses of the Lord towards us; and 20. to bless his holy name continually.

“ 1. Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands, *or*, all the earth: 2. Sing forth the honour of his name; make his praise glorious.”

“ The holy church, throughout all the world,” is here called upon to lift up her voice, like the jubilee trumpet of old, in thanksgiving; to celebrate that NAME, which is above every name; and to make the praise of Jesus glorious, both by word and deed; that so others, hearing our voices, and seeing our works, may be led to glorify him, in like manner.

“ 3. Say unto God, How terrible *art thou* in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.”

The subjects proposed are the various and awful manifestations of divine “power;” of that power which made, and which continues to support, the world; which overthrows, and raises up, empires; which subverted the kingdom of Satan, established that of Christ, and caused its enemies either to relinquish, or dissemble, their hostility. Happy the man, whose heart and affections unfeignedly “submit themselves” to the sceptre of Messiah!

“4. All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing *to* thy name.”

What David spake in the future, the church now speaketh in the present tense—“All the earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting—Day by day we magnify thee; and we worship thy name ever, world without end.” A day is coming when this shall be the case, in an unlimited sense of the words; when Jews and Gentiles, quick and dead, heaven and earth, shall compose one perfect and truly harmonious choir.

“5. Come, and see the works of God; *he is* terrible *in his* doing toward the children of men. 6. He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him.”

The prophet, after inviting men to contemplate “the works of God,” sets before them, for that purpose, two great miracles wrought for Israel; namely, the division of the Red Sea, and that of the river Jordan; by the former they escaped Egypt, by the latter they entered Canaan. Under these two figurative transactions, the Christian church beholds, and,

in the words which describe them, she celebrates, two corresponding works of mercy wrought for her; namely, the deliverance of her children from the dominion of sin, by the waters of baptism; and their admission into the kingdom of heaven, through the grave and gate of death. If the Israelites rejoiced in God their Saviour, for the former blessings, much more, surely, ought we so to do, for the latter.

“7. He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious, *or*, the rebellious shall not, exalt themselves.”

The uncontrollable sovereignty, and superintending providence, of our God and King, are topics on which we should ever delight to dwell. Establish, O Lord, thy kingdom within us, and suffer not our “rebellious” passions to “exalt themselves” against it.

“8. O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard: 9. Who holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.”

But chiefly are we bound to “bless” and “praise” God, for that goodness and mercy, by which our feet are turned back from the ways of death, placed in the path of “life,” and enabled to walk therein, without falling into perdition; until, having finished our pilgrimage in the world, we lie down in peace, and our flesh resteth sweetly in hope.

“10. For thou, O God, hast proved us; thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.”

Notwithstanding the mercy of God, and the salvation wrought for us, we are here taught to expect affliction and tribulation; which indeed are oftentimes necessary; for, having in our composition a mixture of the earth from whence we came, with a base alloy of concupiscence, we stand as much in need of adversity, as metals, in like circumstances, do of the fire, to refine and purify our tempers. Try us, O God; but enable us to stand the trial!

“ 11. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidest affliction upon our loins. 12. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and water; but thou broughtest us into a wealthy *place*.”

Various calamities are here mentioned, which God suffers to fall upon his people. As first, their being “brought into the net,” or ensnared and taken captive by their enemies, whom they had not power to resist or escape. Secondly, “affliction upon the loins,” or hard servitude under heavy burdens. Thirdly, “men riding over their heads,” or the manifold oppressions of persecuting tyrants, trampling them under their feet, like war-horses in the day of battle. Fourthly, passing “through fire and water,” or troubles of different and contrary kinds, though alike deadly and destructive. But he who brought Israel from among the brick-kilns of Egypt, and through the waters of the Red Sea, and the river Jordan, into the promised rest, will bring us safely through every fiery trial, and through the waves of a troublesome world, to the land of everlasting peace and comfort.

“ 13. I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings; I will pay thee my vows, 14. Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. 15. I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams: I will offer bullocks with goats.”

Under the Gospel, the obligation of “going to the house of God” and there “paying vows,” still continues; but the “offerings” are changed. The legal sacrifices have been abolished by the oblation of the body of Christ, once for all. This oblation is commemorated in the eucharist; at the celebration of which, we now offer up our prayers and praises, ourselves, our souls and bodies, a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice, acceptable to God, in the name, and through the merits of the Redeemer. These offerings, if vowed in the season of sickness and sorrow, should be paid in the days of health and gladness.

“ 16. Come *and* hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.”

Every man should be ready, like David, to celebrate the mercies of God vouchsafed to him. It is a debt of gratitude to his Saviour, who is glorified; and a debt of charity to his brethren, who are edified thereby; provided only, that it be done with sobriety and humility.

“ 17. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.”

The mean by which we obtain salvation, is faith; which, as it sheweth us both our disease and our physician, inclineth us to pray to the latter for a cure

of the former. Prayer is one gift of God; and every other gift is obtained by it.

“18. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear *me*.”

The prayer which is “heard,” is the prayer of the penitent, heartily grieved and wearied with sin, hating, and longing to be delivered from it. For God heareth not hypocrites, who, while they outwardly disavow, yet inwardly “regard” and cherish “iniquity;” from which every one, who nameth the name of Christ, ought to depart.

“19. *But* verily God hath heard *me*; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.”

David was heard, when God delivered him from his enemies, and set him on the throne of Israel: Christ was heard, when God raised him from the dead, and exalted him to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens: and every man is heard, when God raises him from sin to righteousness, as an earnest of his future resurrection from dust to glory. Let every such man praise the Lord, and say, with David, in the last verse of our Psalm,

“20. Blessed *be* God, who hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from *me*.”

PSALM LXVII.

ARGUMENT.—In this evangelical Psalm, the Israelitish church is introduced as partly praying for, and partly foretelling, the advent of Christ, and the conversion of the nations, with the joy and gladness that should be consequent thereupon. The Christian church now uses, and will continue to use, the Psalm, with propriety, until the fulness of the Gentiles shall be come in, the conversion of the Jews effected, and Christ shall appear the second time, finally to accomplish the salvation of his chosen.

“ 1. God be merciful unto us, and bless us; *and* cause his face to shine upon us.”

The Israelitish church, by the mouth of the prophet, expresseth her ardent desire after Messiah's advent and appearance in the flesh; she prayeth, that God would be “merciful unto her,” as he had promised; that, by so doing, he would “bless” her with the blessings of pardon and peace, of grace and glory; and, in one word, that he would “cause his face to shine upon her” by the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, making her to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, reviving her with the glad tidings of the Gospel, and enlightening her with the light of salvation.

“ 2. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.”

Nor was she studious, as her degenerate children have since been, to confine the favour of heaven within her own pale. If she had a good wish for herself, she had one likewise for others; and therefore prayed that the “way” to life eternal might be “known,” not in Jewry alone, but over all the

“earth,” and that the virtues of that salutary medicine, which was able to restore health and vigour to the diseased and languishing spirits of men, might be published “among all nations.”

“3. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.”

As if she had said—Hitherto, indeed, blessed Lord, thou hast thought fit to make me the guardian and keeper of that great deposit, thy true religion, from which the nations revolted, and fell; but the time is coming, when, by the Gospel of thy dear Son, they shall again be called to the knowledge of thee. Thy glory, impatient, as it were, of any longer restraint, and demanding a larger sphere, shall diffuse itself, like the light of heaven, to the ends of the world. Hasten, then, O hasten the dawning of that happy day, when congregations of converted Gentiles shall every where lift up their voices, and perhaps in the words of this very Psalm, sing to thy praise and glory!

“4. O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy, for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.”

And a very sufficient cause, surely, is here assigned, why the “nations” should “be glad, and sing for joy,” upon the erection of Messiah’s kingdom in the midst of them; namely, because he would “judge the people righteously;” breaking the yoke of the oppressor, and the iron rod of the prince of this world; becoming himself an advocate in the cause of his church; introducing her into the glorious liberty of the children of God, whose service is per-

fect freedom; and, with a sceptre, around which justice and mercy are wreathed together, “governing the nations upon earth.”

“5. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.” *Chorus repeated, as above, ver. 3.* “6. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us.”

Then, when that long-expected time shall arrive, “the earth shall yield her increase;” the nations of the world shall be converted to the faith, and become fruitful in every good word and work, through the benediction of heaven upon them.*

“7. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.”

The evangelical “blessings,” predicted in this Psalm, have been long since poured out upon “the ends of the earth,” by the bountiful hand of God in Christ. Let us beseech him to add yet this to all his other mercies, that, in return for such unmerited favours, the redeemed may have grace evermore to pay him the tribute of fear and obedience, of duty and love.

PSALM LXVIII.

Thirteenth Day.—Morning Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—This beautiful, sublime, and comprehensive, but very difficult, Psalm, is one of those which the church has appointed to be used on Whit-sunday. It seems evidently to have been composed on that festive and joyful occasion, the

* *Universæ gentes ad Deum convertentur, et electi abundant bonis operibus, rerumque omnium copiâ.*—BOSSUET.

removal of the ark to Mount Sion. See 2 Sam. vi. 1 Chron. xv.* Under this figure, David, foreseeing the exaltation of Messiah, speaks of him, whom he describes, 1, 2. as arising, and vanquishing his enemies; 3—6. as causing the faithful to rejoice, and showing mercy to the afflicted; 7—15. as bringing his church out of bondage, supporting her in the world by the Word and the Spirit, purging away her corruptions, and subduing her adversaries; the groundwork being laid in the history of the Egyptian deliverance, the Manna and the Law given in the wilderness, and the overthrow of the Canaanitish nations. 16—20. David returns to the scene before him, celebrates the ascension of Christ with power and great glory, to the heavenly Sion, and the gifts he should from thence pour down upon men; 21—23. foretells the vengeance he would take on his opposers; 24—28. sets forth the order of the church in her services; 29—31. predicts the conversion of the nations; all of whom, 32—35. he exhorts to unite in chanting forth the praises of their God and Saviour.

“1. Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered; let them also that hate him flee before him.”

These words were used by Moses, whenever the ark set forward before the armies of Israel, in their progress towards Canaan: Numb. x. 35. David, in like manner, uses them in this triumphal hymn, on

* The argument seems to be, a prognostication of success to David and the kingdom of Israel, and victory over their enemies, in consequence of the manifestation of the especial presence of God on Mount Sion, and by his power exerted in their favour. In the mystical sense, which is authorized by St. Paul. Eph. iv. 8. it is, according to Vitranga, “*Ascensio Christi in cœlos, et sessio ad dextram Patris; et illius effecta, quæ sunt collectio et conservatio ecclesiæ, ac destructio hostium sibi et ecclesiæ, adversorum.*”—Bishop Lowth, in Merrick’s Annotations. Dr. Chandler, in his “Critical History of the Life of David,” has given an admirable exposition of the literal, or historical, sense of this Psalm, and a very ingenious division of it into five parts, founded on the supposition of its being performed at the removal of the ark. The author has been greatly assisted, in the ensuing comment, by the Doctor’s exposition, and the reader will find the division of the Psalm inserted.

the removal of the ark to the city of Zion: 1 Chron. xiii. and xv. Dr. Chandler supposes this part of the Psalm, from ver. 1. to ver. 6. inclusive, to have been sung when the ark was taken up on the shoulders of the Levites. The church now celebrates in the same terms, the substance of the foregoing shadows; she sings the praises of her Redeemer, rising from the dead, and preceding the Israel of God, to the true land of promise; when his "enemies," the powers of darkness, sin, and death, "were scattered, and they that hated him fled before him." And the Christian in the hour of temptation, will always find this verse a most powerful and profitable ejaculation.

"2. As smoke is driven away, so drive *them* away; as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God."

The sudden and utter destruction of the enemies of God, and of his people, is resembled, first, to the dissipation of "smoke," which, though it rises from the earth in black and tremendous clouds, is by the wind presently brought to nothing; secondly, to the melting of "wax," which though, to appearance, of a firm and solid consistence, yet, when held to the fire for a few minutes, dissolves, and makes no more resistance. So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord, within us. Let our vain imaginations be dispersed before thy Spirit, and our corruptions melt and die away, at the presence of thy light and thy truth.

"3. But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice."

A variety of expressions is used in the Hebrew,

to denote the festive “joy” and “delight” with which the righteous celebrate the triumphs of their God over his and their enemies, under each dispensation respectively. When the heart is full of these sensations, it has no desire to resort to the world for pleasure.

“4. Sing unto God, sing praises unto his name; extol him that rideth upon the heavens, by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.”

The prophet exhorts the people of God to magnify, with psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, the eternal and incommunicable “name” of him “who was, and is, and is to come;” who, deriving being from none, gives it to all; and who, as Redeemer of his people, is exalted above the “heavens,” and all the powers therein; above the gods of the nations, acknowledged and glorified by saints and angels; feared and trembled at by ungodly men, and evil spirits.*

“5. A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.”

After a description of God’s “majesty,” the Psalmist proceeds to make mention of his “mercy” towards the afflicted Israelites, who had suffered so

* The idea of “riding on the heavens,” furnished by our translation, is here followed, because *לדרכ בשמים*, in the 33d verse, seems to be exactly parallel. But Bishop Lowth, Mr. Merrick, and Dr. Chandler, render *בערבורה בלך לדרכ*, “Prepare the way for him who rideth through the deserts,” that is, who rode upon the cherubim, through the wilderness; alluding to the passage of the ark. This construction seems most agreeable to the common usage of the words employed in the original. Either way, the idea is truly great and sublime.

much in Egypt, and in the wilderness. The cause of the “fatherless and widow” he takes into his own hands. But never did he do this in so full and extensive a manner, as when, by becoming man, he betrothed the church to himself in righteousness, and became a father to her fatherless children.

“6. God setteth the solitary in families; he bringeth out those which are bound in chains; *but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.*”

The “solitary,” or destitute, in this verse, are the same persons with the “fatherless and widow,” in the foregoing; those, as Dr. Chandler observes, whose fathers and families had been destroyed in Egypt, or fallen in the wilderness; who, therefore, were left alone, destitute of help. These God afterwards “made to sit down in families,” blessed them with a numerous progeny, and the peaceable enjoyment of domestic felicity. Thus hath since been manifested the same tender care of Heaven, in calling home the wretched outcasts among the nations, and admitting them into the holy and happy family of the children of God. Another instance of God’s mercy, mentioned in this verse, is that he “bringeth out those which are bound with chains,” delivering his people from a spiritual, as he once did Israel from a temporal bondage. “But the rebellious,” the ungodly and impenitent, “dwell in a dry land,” in a spiritual desert, where no waters of life, of comfort, and salvation, flow. Such is the state of the rebellious Jews at this day, like that of their murmuring predecessors in the wilderness. This allusion, says Bishop Lowth, to the deliverance from the

Egyptian bondage, and the destruction of the murmurers in the desert, brings in, with great ease, the full subject of the Exodus, in the next verse.

“ 7. O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people; when thou didst march through the wilderness: 8. The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God; *even Sinai itself was moved* at the presence of God, the God of Israel.”

This part of the Psalm, from ver. 7. to ver. 14. is the second, in Dr. Chandler's division. It is supposed to have been sung when the procession began, and to have lasted till Mount Sion was in view. The prophet goes back to commemorate the wonders wrought for Israel, when Jehovah, by his presence in the cloudy pillar, conducted them through the wilderness: when, descending to deliver the law, he bowed the heavens and shook the earth, and caused Sinai to quake from its foundations. The Christian church singing this Psalm on the day of Pentecost, commemorates, under these terms and figures, her redemption from the spiritual Egypt, by the resurrection of Jesus, with mighty signs and wonders, and the succeeding delivery of the new law from Mount Sion, after the descent of the Holy Spirit; by which the old Jewish dispensation was shaken and removed, to make way for one that should last for ever. See Heb. xii. 18—28.

“ 9. Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful, *Heb.* a free, liberal, *or*, gracious rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance when it was weary.”

As the heavens, at the command of God, rained

down manna, &c. to strengthen and refresh the well-nigh famished people, in the wilderness; so, by the descent of the Spirit from above, bringing with him the word of life, the church, in her infant and languid state, was mightily confirmed and invigorated.

“ 10. Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.”

In the former verse, the Psalmist tells us, that God hath confirmed, refreshed and revived, his inheritance, by the plentiful, and as it were voluntary, showers of bread and flesh, that he rained down upon them. In these words, Dr. Chandler apprehends, he speaks of the manner, as well as abundance of the food thus given them; and renders the verse thus—“היהך, Thy food,” or, “As to thy food,” the food which thou gavest them, “ישבו בזה, They dwelt in the midst of it; thou didst prepare, O God, by thy goodness, for the poor.” Thus the history informs us, that the manna, covered by the dew, “lay round about the host;” and that the quails were “let fall by the camp, about a day’s journey on one side, and a day’s journey on the other, round about the camp:” Exod. xvi. 13. Numb. xi. 31. This was literally “dwelling in the midst of the food God had provided them.” By the ministration of the word and sacraments, in the Christian church, the true manna, the bread which cometh down, with the dew of God’s blessing, from heaven, is continually furnished, for the nourishment of those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness.” It “falls round about the camp,” and, “as to this thy food, O God,” we, thy favoured people, have the happiness to

“ dwell in the midst of it:” thus “ thou hast prepared, of thy goodness, for the poor in spirit.”

“ 11. The LORD gave the word; great *was* the company of those that published *it*.”

He who supplied his people with food in the wilderness, enabled them likewise to vanquish the numerous enemies that opposed them in their passage through it, the Amalekites, the Amorites, the Midianites, the Moabites, &c. With respect to all these enemies, “ the Lord gave the word.” The Israelites engaged them, by his order: see Numb. xxi. 34. xxv. 17. and, under his conduct and blessing, obtained the victory over them. When the enemies of man’s salvation were vanquished by the resurrection of Christ, and the Heathen nations were to own his power, again “ the Lord gave the word.” It was published, at first, by apostles, confessors, and martyrs, and hath been since published continually, by all the churches, who celebrate in their services the victories of their Redeemer; as in old time, prophets and prophetesses, Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Deborah, and others, with the armies of Israel, sang triumphal songs, on occasion of temporal, but figurative conquests.

“ 12. * Kings with their armies did flee apace: *Heb.* fled away, fled away: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.”

When God, by the hand of Moses and his suc-

* Bishop Lowth thinks, with Dr. Hammond, that this verse was the Song, sung by the choir, mentioned in the verse preceding. Dr. Chandler adds the next verse to it.

cessor Joshua, led his people through the wilderness, into the land of promise, the kings of Canaan, with their mighty hosts, were discomfited; and the women of Israel, who “tarried at home, divided the spoil” of their vanquished enemies. After the conquest of the Midianites, as Dr. Chandler observes, God ordered the prey to be divided between them who went out on that expedition, and the rest of the congregation who continued in their tents: Numb. xxxi. 27. Thus, in the spiritual war, apostles, confessors, and martyrs, went out to the battle, fought and conquered; while the benefits of the victory extended to thousands and millions, who, without being exposed to their conflicts, and torments, have enjoyed the fruit of their labours.

“13. Though ye have lien among the pots, *yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.*”

By “lying among the pots,”* or in “dust and ashes,” is evidently denoted a state of affliction, and wretchedness, like that of Israel in Egypt, which was exchanged for one of the utmost dignity and splendour in Canaan; one as different from the former, as a caldron discoloured by smoke and soot, is from the bright and beautiful plumage of an eastern

* My worthy and learned friend, Mr. Parkhurst, in his Hebrew Lexicon, gives the following account of the word שפתיים (derived from שפר, to put or set any thing in order)—*rows of stones, “on which the caldrons or pots were placed. Lying among these denotes the most abject slavery; for this was the place of rest allotted to the vilest slaves.”* So our translators render it, in the margin of Ezek. xl. 43. Dr. Chandler adopts the same interpretation of the word.

dove, glistening interchangeably, as with silver and gold. Thus the church of Christ emerged from a state of persecution and tribulation, into one of splendour and magnificence. And such is the change made in the spiritual condition of any man, when he passes from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; he is invested with the robe of righteousness, and adorned with the graces of the Spirit of holiness.

“ 14. When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was *white* as snow in Salmon.”

The purport of this difficult verse seems to be, that all was white as snow, that is, all was brightness, joy, and festivity, about mount Salmon, בעלמון רשולג when the Almighty, fighting for his people Israel, vanquished their enemies, בדה, in or about that part of the country.

“ 15. The hill of God *is as* the hill of Bashan; a high hill, *as* the hill of Bashan.”

When the ark came in view of Mount Sion, the place of its fixed residence for the future, and probably when they began to ascend it, Dr. Chandler apprehends, this and the two following verses were sung. And if these words be read with an interrogation, he conceives they will appear suitable to the occasion, and worthy of the genuine spirit of poetry. “The hill of God,” that hill which God hath chosen to inhabit, “is it the hill of Bashan, the hill with its craggy eminences, the hill of Bashan?” Bashan may boast of its proud eminences, its high summits; but is that the hill where God will fix his residence?

The prophet speaks of Bashan with contempt and disdain, in comparison of Sion. And this agrees well with what immediately follows—

“16. Why leap ye, *or*, why look ye askance with envy, ye high hills? *This is the hill which* God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will abide *in it* for ever.”

The Psalmist, in commemorating God's former mercies and loving-kindnesses, having] been led to mention the towering hills of Salmon and Bashan by a masterly transition, suddenly resumes his original subject, with a beautiful apostrophe to those mountains, letting them know, that however proudly they might lift up their heads above the rest, or, in the language of poetry, “look askance with envy” on Mount Sion, yet this was the mount, which Jehovah had determined to honour with his special presence; thither he was now ascending, with the ark of his strength; and there, between the cherubim, in the place prepared for him, he would “dwell for ever:” till the whole dispensation would be at an end, till the glory of the Lord should be revealed in human nature; till God should be manifest in the flesh, and the true tabernacle and temple should succeed the typical. After that, the privileges of Sion were transferred to the Christian church; she became, and while the world lasts, will continue to be, the “hill in which God delighteth to dwell;” she will therefore be justly entitled to the pre-eminence over all that may seem to be great and glorious in the world.

“17. The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand,

even thousands of angels, or, thousands repeated : the LORD is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place, or, Sinai is in the sanctuary."

The Psalmist, in the preceding verse, had declared Sion to be the habitation of Jehovah. In this verse is described the majesty and magnificence of his appearance there, as a mighty conqueror of the enemies of his people, riding upon the cherubim, as in a triumphal chariot, with all the hosts of heaven, as it were, in his retinue. Thus God descended on Sinai, with the fire, the cloud, and the glory; thus he manifested himself, when taking possession of "the holy place" prepared for him in Sion; 2 Chron. v. 13. and in some such manner we may suppose king Messiah to have entered heaven at his ascension, when he went up in the clouds, with power and great glory, and all the attendant spirits joined his train, rejoicing to minister to their Lord, and increase the pomp and splendour of that glorious day.

"18. Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts from men; yea, *for* the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell *among them*."

When the ark had ascended mount Sion, and was deposited in the place assigned for it, the singers are supposed, by Dr. Chandler, to have proceeded with this part of the Psalm, in which they celebrated the ascension of their God and King, by the symbol of his presence, to the heights of Sion, after having subdued their enemies, and enriched his people with the spoil of the vanquished, and the gifts of the tributary nations; of which much was probably employed

in the service of the tabernacle, and afterwards in building the temple, first designed by David, "that the Lord God might dwell," and have a fixed, permanent habitation, among his people. But this whole transaction, like many others of old, being a figurative one, the apostle, Ephes. iv. 8. has applied the words before us to our blessed Saviour (the true ARK, on which the GLORY rested), who personally ascended up to the highest heavens, "led captivity captive," by triumphing over his conquered enemies, and having received gifts from his heavenly Father, as the fruits of his victory, gave them unto men, as was most conducive to the establishment of his church, "that the Lord God might dwell among them. Thou hast ascended on high;" thou O Christ, who didst descend, from the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, to the lower parts of the earth, art again ascended, from the lower parts of the earth to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens: "thou hast led captivity captive;" thou hast conquered the conqueror, bound the strong one, redeemed human nature from the grave, and triumphantly carried it, with thee, to the throne of God; "thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also;" and, being thus ascended into thy glory, thou hast received of the Father the promise of the Spirit, with all his gifts and graces, to bestow upon the sons of men;* even upon such as heretofore have not only broken thy laws, but appeared in arms against thee; yet of such as these, converted by the

* The Psalmist mentions these gifts as received: "Thou hast received gifts for men;" the apostle, in his citation, sheweth us the end for which they were received; "He gave gifts unto

power of thy Gospel, wilt thou form and establish a church; “that the LORD God may dwell among them;” that so, of thy faithful people, gathered from all parts of the world, may be built up a living temple, “a habitation of God through the Spirit.”

“19. Blessed *be* the LORD, *who* daily loadeth us *with benefits*: *Heb.* carries, *or*, supports us; *even* the God of our salvation. 20. *He that is* our God, *is* the God of salvation: and unto God the Lord *belong* the issues from death, *Heb.* the goings forth to death, *or*, of death.”

The preceding survey of God’s dispensations constraineth the church to break out into an act of praise, and to bless the preserver of men, the author of eternal “salvation;” in whose hands are the “goings forth of death;” in other words, who has “the keys of death and the grave;” Rev. i. 18. who is possessed of power to confine, and to release; to kill, and to make alive.

“21. But God shall wound the head of his enemies: *and* the hairy scalp, *or*, crown, of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses.”

The meaning is—God shall strike deep, or exhaust the blood of the head of his enemies, even the hairy crown of him that goes on in his guilty practices; where the emphasis consists in the description

men.” Or rather, as the best critics have observed, in the Hebrew idiom, to “take gifts for another,” is the same as to “give them to another.” Thus we read, 1 Kings iii. 24. “Take me a sword;” that is, give or bring it me. Gen. xviii. 5. “I will take a bit of bread;” that is, for you, or to give it you,—“and comfort ye your hearts.”

of God's enemies, who were such as persevered in their criminal actions. This verse begins a prediction of that vengeance, which the person, who was "ascended on high," would infallibly execute upon his impenitent enemies, and which was shadowed forth in the destruction of the enemies of Israel, by David, after that the ark of God was placed upon the hill of Sion. See 2 Sam. viii. The expressions, "the head," and the "hairy crown," denote the principal part, the strength, the pride, and the glory of the adversary, which was to be crushed, according to the original sentence; "He shall bruise thy head." Gen. iii. 15.

"22. The LORD said, I will bring again from Bashan; I will bring *my people* again from the depths of the sea: 23. That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of *thine* enemies; and the tongue of thy dogs in the same."

Abner, in his conference with the elders of Israel, to bring them over to David's interest, tells them, "The Lord hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David, I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies:" 2 Sam. iii. 18. Thus Jehovah had promised to repeat in Israel, by David, his glorious acts; to work as signal victories and deliverances for his people, as he had formerly done in the field of Bashan, and at the Red Sea; when they saw their enemies dead at their feet. By the glorious resurrection, and triumphant ascension of king Messiah, by the conquests of the Gospel, and the unparalleled overthrow of its opposers, were

these figures realized, and these shadows changed into substances.

“ 24. They have seen thy goings, *or*, marches in procession, O God; *even* the goings, *or*, marches, of my God, my King, in, *or*, into the sanctuary.”

When the ark was safely deposited, the sacrifices were offered, the solemnity well-nigh concluded, and the whole assembly about to return back, Dr. Chandler supposes the singers to have struck up, and joined in the remaining part of this noble anthem. These words contain a sort of triumph, because this great work of translating the ark was now so happily accomplished. The people of Israel had a pledge and earnest of those mighty things which God would do for them, by the joyful and victorious manner in which, with the ark of his presence, he had taken possession of the place prepared for him on mount Sion, and gone “into the sanctuary.” A like pledge and earnest of her future enlargement and exaltation, was the ascension of her Lord and Head, to the Christian church.

“ 25. The singers went before, the players on instruments *followed* after; among *them were* the damsels playing with timbrels.”

The joy and gladness expressed by David, and the house of Israel, when in solemn procession, with the sound of vocal and instrumental music, they “brought up the ark of Jehovah, and set it in its place,” 2 Sam. vi. 5, 15, 17. may be considered as a prelude to that voice of universal exultation, with which the Christian church, in her holy services,

doth now celebrate the resurrection and ascension of her Redeemer.

“26. Bless ye God in the congregations, *even* the LORD, from the fountain of Israel.”

“Bless ye God in the congregations;” in this form of words the Israelites are supposed, when accompanying the ark, to have reciprocally exhorted and encouraged each other to exert their utmost powers in the sacred employment of blessing and thanking God: “even the Lord from the fountain of Israel:” the “fountain of Israel” is the same with the “stock, or family of Israel.” See Isa. xlvi. 1. The sense of this latter clause therefore is, “Bless the Lord, ye who are sprung from the stock of Israel;” thus is the duty of blessing and thanksgiving enforced on the congregations of the faithful, in all ages.

“27. There *is* little Benjamin *with* their ruler, the princes of Judah *and* their council, the princes of Zebulun, *and* the princes of Naphtali.”

The literal rendering of this verse is—“There is little Benjamin their ruler, the princes of Judah their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali.” In this enumeration of the tribes of Israel, that were present at the removal of the ark, four only are mentioned; Benjamin and Judah, who dwelt nearest to the city of David; Zebulun and Naphtali, who were the farthest distant from it; to show, as Dr. Chandler observes, the unanimity of the whole nation, and of all the tribes far and near, in attending this solemnity, to testify their willing acknowledgment of David for their king, and the

city of David for their capital, where all the great solemnities of religion should be performed, and their annual festivals continually celebrated. Benjamin, though the youngest tribe, is named first, and called the “ruler;” because from that tribe sprang Saul, the first king of Israel. The attendance of this tribe showed, that all envy and opposition to David, from Saul’s party, was at an end. Upon David’s accession to the crown, Judah became the royal tribe, and supported the throne by its counsels. Zebulun and Naphtali were tribes of eminent learning and knowledge. See Gen. xlix. 21. Judg. v. 14. Thus, after the publication of the Gospel, the nations flocked into the church, both those that were near, and those that were afar off; power, wisdom, and learning, submitted themselves to the kingdom, and conspired to set forth the glory, of Messiah.

“ 28. Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.”

The former part of this verse contains a comfortable assurance given to the church, that God had made provision, and issued out orders, for her establishment and security. In the latter clause is a prayer, that he would accomplish all his counsels concerning her; and, as he had begun a good work, so that he would vouchsafe to perfect it unto the day of the Lord.

“ 29. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem, shall kings bring presents unto thee.”

David foretells, that on the establishment of the then church, and worship in Jerusalem, the kings of

the Gentiles should come, and make their oblations at the* temple of God; which happened in his days, and those of his son Solomon, as an earnest and figure of that plenary accession of the kings of the earth to the church of Christ, which was to take place in the latter days, under the Gospel. See 2 Sam. viii. 9—11. 1 Kings v. 1. x. 1, 24. 2 Chron. ix. 23. Isa. lx. 3, 6. Matt. ii. 11. Rev. xxi. 24.

“30. Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, *till every one* submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people *that* delight in war.”

We have here a prophetic prayer against the enemies of the Israelitish church. The whole verse, when literally translated, runs thus—“Rebuke the wild beast of the reeds, the congregation of the mighty among the calves of the nations, skipping, or exulting, with pieces of silver; scatter the people that delight in war.” By the “wild beast of the reeds,” is to be understood the Egyptian power, described by its emblem, the crocodile, or river-horse, creatures living among the “reeds” of the Nile. The “calves of the nations” intend the objects of worship among the Egyptians, their Apis, Osiris, &c. around which the “congregation of the mighty” assembled. And by their “skipping with,” or, “exulting in, pieces of silver,” may either be meant their dancing at their idolatrous festivals with the

* The tabernacle is called *הֵיכָל*, 1 Sam. iii. 3. This might, otherwise, seem inconsistent with the supposed occasion of the Psalm, and the times of David, when there was yet no temple there. Bishop LOWTH.

tinkling instruments called “sistra,” which might be made of “silver;” or else it may imply their “glorifying in pieces of silver,” or, “in their riches.” The last member of the verse is plain, “Scatter the people that delight in war.” The whole is evidently a prayer of the prophet to this effect, that it would please God to bring down and overthrow the strength, the pride, and the idolatry of Egypt, that ancient adversary and oppressor of Israel.*—The Christian church, in like manner, through faith in the power of her Lord, risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, prayeth for the confusion of her implacable enemies, who delight in opposing the kingdom of Messiah.

“31. Princes, or, ambassadors, shall come out of Egypt: Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.”

The hostile powers being overthrown, and the church of Israel fully established, the nations around her, even those which had been most given to idolatry, sued for her friendship, and came to Jerusalem, with their gifts and oblations; as, in like manner,

* *Increpa regem Egypti populo tuo invidentem, increpa etiam optimates qui inter populos honore et viribus eminent, argenteis clavis, vel aliis insignibus ornati.*—BOSSUET. See Bishop Lowth, *Prælect. vi. ad fin. edit. 8vo.* The sense of the verse cannot be better expressed, than it is by Mr. Merrick in his version :

The beast, that from his reedy bed,
On Nile's proud banks, uplifts the head,
Rebuke, indignant; nor the throng
Forget, from whose misguided tongue
The heifer and the grazing steer,
The offered vow, unconscious hear;
While to the silver's tinkling sound,
Their feet in solemn dance rebound.

after the defeat of Maxentius and Maximin, the Roman empire, with all its tributary provinces, was added to the church of Christ.

“ 32. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth :
O sing praises unto the LORD.”

“ Rapt into future times,” the prophet exhorteth, not Judea only, but all “ the kingdoms of the earth,” to unite in chanting forth the praises of their God and Saviour. In the fulness of time, this exhortation was heard and obeyed. For Eusebius thus describes the state of the church in the days of Constantine: “ There was one and the same power of the Holy Spirit, which passed through all the members: one soul in all; the same alacrity of faith; one common consent in chanting forth the praises of God.” Euseb. Eccles. Hist. B. x. chap. 2. And it deserves notice, that the primitive Christians, when, delivered from the rage of persecuting tyrants, they freely celebrated their holy festivals, could find no words so well calculated to express the joy and gladness of their hearts, as the songs of Moses, and David, and the prophets, which seemed to have been divinely penned on purpose for their use, upon that glorious occasion. The reader may see several very curious and beautiful instances of this, in the opening of the 10th Book of Eusebius’ History, and in the panegyric there recorded to have been spoken by him, in a full ecclesiastical assembly, to Paulinus, bishop of Tyre, upon the consecration of that church.

“ 33. To him that rideth upon the heaven of
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heavens, *which were* of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, *and that* a mighty voice."

The praises of the church are sung to him who, after his sufferings here below, reascended to take possession of his ancient throne, high above all heavens; who from thence speaketh to the world by his glorious Gospel, mighty and powerful, as thunder, in its effects upon the hearts of men. See Ps. xxix. throughout. The power of Christ's voice, when he was on earth, appeared by the effects which followed, when he said, "Young man arise;" "Lazarus, come forth;" "Peace, be still:" and it will yet farther appear, when "all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and come forth."

"34. Ascribe ye strength unto God; his excellency *is* over Israel, and his strength *is* in the clouds, *Heb.* the skies."

God requires his people to ascribe unto him the kingdom, and the power, and the glory; to acknowledge him as the author of life, health, and salvation, of all they are, and all they have, in nature and in grace; to glorify him as the Creator and Governor of the world, the Redeemer and Sanctifier of his church.

"35. O God, *thou art* terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel *is* he that giveth strength and power unto *his* people. Blessed be God."

The Psalmist, here exemplifying the precept laid down in the foregoing verse, ascribes to God the

glory of his appearance in the sanctuary, as the God and King of Israel, terrifying and dismaying his enemies, comforting and invigorating his people. Such is the presence of a glorified Saviour, by his Spirit, in the Christian church. For this, and all other his mercies, she is bound continually to say, and, by her holy services, continually doth she say, Blessed be God.

PSALM LXIX.

Thirteenth Day.—Evening Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—The application of many passages in this Psalm to our Lord, made by himself and his apostles, as well as the appointment of the whole, by the church, to be used on Good Friday, direct us to consider it as uttered by the Son of God, in the day of his passion. 1—5. He describeth his sufferings, undergone for the sins of men; 6, 7. prayeth that his disciples may not be offended at the pain and shame of the cross;* 8—12. relateth the usage he met with at the hands of the Jews; 13—19. maketh his prayer to the Father; 20, 21. complaineth of his desolate estate, of the reproach cast upon him, and of the gall and vinegar administered to him; 22—28. fortelleth the judgments of heaven, about to fall upon the Jewish nation; 29. returneth to the consideration of his own

* In confesso est apud Christianos, in Psalmo lxi. nobis ob oculos poni Christum, eumque passum. Nos addimus, eumque crucifixum; quia Evangelistæ Matthæus, Marcus, et Johannes, comma vigesimum secundum certæ circumstantiæ crucifixionis Christi applicarunt—Notatum igitur volumus, Christum in tota sua ad Patrem supplicatione (est enim ejusdem argumenti cum Ps. xxii.) describere mortis et calamitatis suæ genus, ut maxime pudendum, et ignominiosum. Item, ad ver. 8, 20, 21.—Christus nullas hic negligit voces, quæ probrum aut ignominiam status, in quo tunc erat, designare valent.—Vitringa, *Observ. Sacr. lib. ii. cap. 10.*

sorrows, and prayeth for deliverance; 30, 31. praiseth the Father for the accomplishment of that deliverance; 32, 33. exhorteth all men to come and partake of it, and, 34. the whole creation to join in a chorus of thanksgiving for it; 35, 36. predicteth the salvation, edification, and perpetuity, of the church.

“ 1. Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto *my* soul. 2. I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.”

The Gospels inform us concerning the constancy and patience of Christ under his sufferings: the sufferings themselves (those in particular of his soul), are largely described in the Psalms; many of which, and this among the rest, seem to have been indited beforehand by the Spirit, for his use in the day of trouble. As the head of the church, he here beseecheth the Father to “save,” through him, his mystical body. He compares the sad situation into which he was brought, to that of a drowning man. The divine displeasure, like a stormy tempest, was let loose upon him; the sins of the world, as deep mire, enclosed and detained him; whilst all the waters of affliction went over his head, and penetrated to his vitals.

“ 3. I am weary of my crying, my throat is dried; mine eyes fail, while I wait for my God.”

This verse describes the effects of those supplications which the Son of God offered up, “with strong crying and tears, in the days of his flesh;” Heb. v. 7. of that thirst, which, through loss of blood on the cross, “dried his throat;” and of that long and

patient endurance, when his “eyes failed,” and were closed in darkness, while his faith “waited” for the deliverance promised by the Father. The hour is coming, when our eyes must fail, and be closed; but even then, “let us wait for our God:” in this respect, “let us die the death of that righteous” person, who died for us; “and let our last end be like his.”

“4. They that hate me without a cause, are more than the hairs of my head; they that would destroy me, *being* mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored *that* which I took not away.”

The Jews, the Romans, and the spirits of darkness, made up that multitude of enemies, which, like a herd of evening wolves, surrounded the Lamb of God, thirsting after his blood, nor resting till they had drawn forth the very last drop of it from his heart. And thus the only innocent person in the world suffered for all its guilt, making satisfaction for wrongs which he never did, and “restoring that which he took not away.”*

“5. O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.”

These words, in the mouth of David, or any other sinful son of Adam, are plain enough. They may,

* “Quæ non rapui”—Ex personâ Christi: ita mecum agitur, ac si rapta ab altero, ab altero, eoque innoxio, repetas; neque enim impiorum exemplo, Deo rapui honorem debitum; pro eis solvo quicunque rapuerunt; sicut scriptum est: “Propter scelus populi mei, percussi eum.” Isa. liii. 8.—BOSSUET.

nevertheless, be spoken, as the rest of the Psalm is, in the person of Christ, concerning the iniquities committed by us, but “laid on him;” which he therefore mentions, as if they had been his own; the head complaining of diseases incident only to the members.*

“6. Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake; let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel. 7. Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face.”

The son of God prefers a petition to the Father, that his disciples may not be scandalized on account of his passion, or be tempted to relinquish their trust in God, at beholding his only and beloved Son forsaken on the cross; since it was not for any demerit of his own, but for the sake of God’s glory, as well as man’s salvation, that he “bore reproach, and shame covered his face.” It ought to be the prayer of every Christian, especially if he be a minister of the Gospel, that his sufferings in the world may not give just offence to the brethren, or the church; which they never will do, if he suffers in a good cause, with a good conscience.

“8. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother’s children. 9. For the

* So this verse is interpreted by the fathers, and many of the commentators cited by Poole, in his Synopsis—Thus also Bossuet—“*Insipientiam meam et delicta mea*”—*Quæ in me suscepi. “Quia posuit in eo Dominus iniquitates omnium nostrum.”*—Isa. liii. 6.

zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me."

The Jews were Christ's "brethren," according to the flesh. To them he was a "stranger and an alien." "He came to his own, and his own received him not." "We know," said they, "that God spake unto Moses; but as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is." And again, "Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil." John i. 11. ix. 29. viii. 48. The ground of all this enmity was the "zeal" of Christ for the reformation and purification of the church, which he manifested in his reproofs and exhortations, as also by the emblematical act of driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple. Upon this latter occasion, the evangelist tells us, "his disciples remembered that it was written," that is, it was predicted of Messiah in this Psalm, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up:" John ii. 17. Therefore, as he adds immediately, "the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." In calumniating and blaspheming the works of the Son of God, the Jews reproached both the Father who gave him those works to do, and the Spirit, by which he did them: all which reproaches fell on the man Christ, as the visible instrument employed in the doing of them. This last passage is thus quoted and applied by St. Paul—"Even Christ pleased not himself: but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me:" Rom. xv. 3. The usage our Lord met with from his brethren, because of his zeal for the house of God,

should comfort those who meet with the same usage, on the same account.

“ 10. When I wept *and chastened* my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. 11. I made sack-cloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them. 12. They that sit in the gate speak against me: and I *was* the song of the drunkards.”

To expiate the sins of his creatures, the King of glory became a man of sorrows; he put on mortal flesh, as a penitential garment; he fasted, and prayed, and mourned, and wept, and humbled himself to the dust, as if he had been the offender, and we the righteous persons that needed no repentance. And what return was made him? “ It was to his reproach, and he became a proverb to them,” for whom he suffered. “ They that sat in the gate,” or, on the “ judgment-seat,” which used to be in the gates of cities, even the senators and judges of the land, the chief priests and elders, “ spake against him,” with cool and deliberate malice; while he was “ the song of the drunken,” and profligate, who more grossly insulted and derided him. The true followers of the holy Jesus will often experience the like treatment, from an evil and adulterous generation.

“ 13. But as for me, my prayer *is* unto thee, O LORD, *in* an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercies hear me, in the truth of thy salvation.”

The Son of God himself, in the midst of sorrows and sufferings, has recourse to prayer, pleading for his church the “ mercies” of the Father, set forth

in the promises, and his “truth,” engaged to make those promises good, in the “salvation” of his chosen, through their head and representative. The “acceptable time,” in which Christ prayed, was the time when he offered the great propitiatory sacrifice. Through the merit of that sacrifice it is, that we have an “acceptable time, and a day of salvation,” allowed us. Behold, now is that time, behold now is that day! Let us not delay one moment to use and improve it aright.

“14. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. 15. Let not the water-flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.”

Messiah petitions for deliverance from calamities, under the same images which were employed at the beginning of the Psalm, to describe those calamities. The purport of the petition is, that the sins of the world, and the sufferings due to them, may not finally overwhelm him, nor the grave “shut her mouth upon him” for ever; but that the morning of his resurrection may, at length, succeed the night of his passion. Such is also the hope and the prayer of the church, and of the Christian, here below.

“16. Hear me, O LORD, for thy loving kindness *is* good; turn unto me, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies. 17. And hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily. 18. Draw nigh unto my soul, *and*

redeem it; deliver me because of mine enemies. 19. Thou hast known my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour; mine adversaries *are* all before thee."

As afflictions increase, the prayers are redoubled: Christ pleads with the Father for redemption from death, on account of his divine "loving-kindness and mercy;" of his own great "trouble;" of his "enemies," that they might be either converted or confounded: of the "reproach, shame, and dishonour," undergone by him, that they might be wiped off, and done away; of the wrong he suffered from his adversaries, whose iniquitous proceedings were "all before God," and known unto him. Deliverance from tribulation and persecution, is prayed for by the church, and by her faithful children, upon the same grounds.

"20. Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked *for some* to take pity, but *there was* none; and for comforters, but I found none. 21. They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

The argument urged by Christ, in these most affecting words, is, that in the extremity of his passion, he was left alone, without a comforter, a friend, or an attendant; while all that were round about him studied to infuse every bitter and acrimonious ingredient into his cup of sorrows. This was literally as well as metaphorically true, when "they gave him to drink vinegar mingled with gall." See Matt. xxvii. 34. John xix. 28. Such are the comforts often administered, by the world, to an afflicted and deserted soul.

“ 22. Their table* shall become a snare before them ; and *that which should have been for their welfare, Heb. their peace offerings, shall become a trap.*”

At this verse beginneth a prediction of those dreadful judgments which heaven has since inflicted upon the crucifiers of the Lord of glory. By their “ table becoming a snare, and their peace-offerings a trap,” is pointed out the consequence of the Jews adhering to the legal services, in opposition to him who is “ the end of the law, for righteousness.” After his sufferings and exaltation, to continue under the law, became not only unprofitable, but destructive, inasmuch as it implied a denial of Messiah’s advent, and a renunciation of every evangelical benefit and blessing. The religion of God’s own appointment was an abomination to him, when reduced to the form of godliness, deserted by its power. Christians, who pride themselves in the one, while they deny and deride the other, would do well to consider this.

“ 23. Thou wilt darken their eyes that they shall not see; and make their loins continually to shake.”

* I have taken the liberty to give a future rendering to the verbs in this and the following verses. That they are to be so understood, saith Dr. Hammond, that is, in the future sense, by way of prediction, and not as an imprecation, see St. Aug. de Civ. l. xvii. c. 19. “ Hæc non optando sunt dicta, sed optandi specie, prophetando—These things are not said by the way of wishing, but under the show or scheme of wishing, by prophecy.” And indeed the Hebrew יִהְיֶה is in the future, and is most fitly rendered, “ shall be.” And so doth the Jewish Arab interpreter observe, that such seeming imprecations, as here and elsewhere occur in the book of Psalms, are not so much by way of imprecation, as by way of prophecy, or prediction of what in God’s best judgments would certainly befall man.—HAM. in loc.

They who loved darkness rather than light, by the righteous judgment of God, were permitted to walk on in darkness, while the blind led the blind. And such still continues to be the state of the Jews, notwithstanding that intolerable weight of woe which made "their loins to shake," and bowed down their backs to the earth. "The veil remaineth yet upon their hearts," in the reading the Old Testament; nor can they see therein "the things which belong unto their peace." These last two verses are cited, as spoken of Israel, by St. Paul, Rom. xi. 9, 10. Afflict us, blessed Lord, if thou seest it good for us to be afflicted; only take not from us, in our affliction, the "light" of thy truth, and the "strength" of thy grace.

"24. Thou wilt pour out thine indignation upon them, and thy wrathful anger will take hold of them."

Never was "indignation so poured out," never did "wrath so take hold" on any nation, as on that, which once was, beyond every other, beloved and favoured. "The wrath," says St. Paul, 1 Thess. ii. 16. "is come upon them to the uttermost, *εις τελος*, to the end," to the very last dregs of the cup of fury. Let every church which boasteth of favours bestowed, and privileges conferred upon her, remember the consequences of their being abused by Jerusalem; and let every individual do the same.

"25. Their habitation shall be desolate, *and* none shall dwell in their tents."

Our Lord seems to have had this passage in his

view, when he said to the Jews, “ Behold, your house is left unto you desolate:” Matt. xxiii. 38. Jerusalem was by the Roman armies destroyed from the foundations. It hath been since indeed rebuilt, and inhabited by Gentiles, by Christians, and by Saracens, but no more by the Jewish people. It is remarkable, that this verse is applied, Acts i. 20. to Judas, considered as the head and representative of that apostate nation, which rejected and delivered up its Prince and Saviour to be crucified. “ He was guide to them that took Jesus:” Acts i. 16. The punishment, therefore, as well as the sin of Israel, is portrayed in his person, and the same prophecy is applicable to him and to his countrymen.*

“ 26. For they persecute *him* whom thou hast smitten, and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.”†

The cause of the foregoing calamities, inflicted on the Jews, is here assigned, namely, that instead of mourning and sympathizing with Messiah, in the day when Jehovah laid on him the iniquities of us all, and afflicted him for our sakes, they, by reproaches and blasphemies, aggravated his sufferings to the uttermost; and afterwards continued to use his disciples

* “ Fiat habitatio eorum deserta”—De Juda proditore exponitur, Act. i. 20. Congruit etiam Judæis, eversa Hierosolyma, quod Christus predixerat: “ Ecce relinquetur vobis domus vestra deserta.” Luc. xiii. 35.—BOSSUET.

† Datur his in verbis ratio longe maxima et gravissima, propter quam Judæi terra sua essent ejiciendi, ac nomine et prerogativis populi Dei privandi, quia nimirum “ eum persequuntur, quem a Deo percussum” vident, hoc est, quem vident ira Divina maximopere pressum, et ad summa ἀδημονίαν redactum.—Vitringa, Observat. Sacr. lib. ii. cap. 9.

in the same manner. It were to be wished, that the sorrows of the penitent, when wounded with a sense of sin, never subjected him to the scorn and contempt of those who would be thought Christians.

“ 27. Thou wilt add iniquity to their iniquity; and they shall not come into thy righteousness.”

As they added affliction to the afflictions of Christ, so God permitted* them to go on, blinded and deserted, in their wickedness, “ adding sin to sin,” filling up the measure of their fathers, still obstinately refusing to come into the church, and partake of the “ righteousness” which is by faith. From all thy judgments, good Lord, deliver us; but above all, from that which punishes one sin with another, and seals up the reprobate to destruction.

“ 28. They shall be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.”

By “ the book of the living,” in which the names of the “ righteous are written,” is to be understood the register of the true servants and worshippers of God, of those who are “ justified,” or made “ righteous,” through faith. In this register, the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the ancient fathers of the Israelitish race, with their true children, stand recorded; but the degenerate and apostate Jews have been long since “ blotted out;” they are no longer the peculium of heaven; nor have they any part or portion in the inheritance of the sons of God. Thus

* Deserendo, et permittendo, non operando; ut Theologi nōrunt.—BOSSUET.

Ezekiel: "They shall not be in the assembly of my people, nor shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel:" xiii. 9. And our Lord, in his conversations with the Jews, took every opportunity to tell them, that they, for their unbelief, should be "cast out," and that the Gentiles, obeying the call of the Gospel, should come from all quarters of the world, and "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God."

"29. But I *am* poor and sorrowful: let thy saving health, O God, *or*, thy salvation shall, *or*, can set me up on high."

Messiah returns to the subject of his own sufferings, which were not a little enhanced by the consideration, that so many of his people would not be the better for them. "I am poor and sorrowful;" "poor," for he was divested of his very garments; "sorrowful," for he was covered over with stripes and wounds. But he knew the hour was coming, when the salvation of God, would raise him from the dead, and "set him up on high." Thus should a disciple of Jesus depart out of the world, joyfully relinquishing its goods, patiently bearing its evils, and confidently expecting a resurrection to glory.

"30. I will praise the name of God with a song, and magnify him with thanksgiving."

Here, as in the xxii. and many other Psalms, the scene changes from sorrow to joy; from a state of suffering to one of triumph; from the passion to the resurrection. Jesus, risen from the dead, declares his resolution of praising and magnifying the Father, for

the salvation of the world, happily accomplished by his labours and sufferings, which were now for ever at an end. The church does the same incessantly, on earth, and in heaven.

“ 31. *This* also shall please the LORD, better than an ox *or* bullock, that hath horns and hoofs.”

A bullock was in its prime for sacrifice, under the law, when it began to put forth its “horns and hoofs.” The infinite distance, therefore, in point of value, between the best legal sacrifices, and those of obedience, love, and praise, as offered by Christ, and, through him, by his church, under the Gospel, is pointed out in this verse. See Psalm xl. 6, &c. l. 23.

“ 32. The humble shall see *this*, *and* be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God: *or*, be seeking God, and your heart shall live.”

It is foretold, that the “humble,” or the “poor in spirit,” that is, the meek and lowly followers of the holy Jesus, should find everlasting joy and comfort in the glad tidings of salvation; all mankind are exhorted to “seek after God,” as manifested in the Gospel of his Son; and the reward promised is “life spiritual and eternal.”*

“ 33. For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners.”

An argument for our “seeking after God,” is

* Hæc et sequentia, ad redemptionem per Christum, sub figurâ solutæ captivitatis, videntur pertinere.—BOSSUET.

the experience of patriarchs, prophets, and saints, who in all ages have sought, and found him, by repentance and faith: and that the Lord “despiseth not his prisoners,” is evident from what he did and suffered, to deliver their souls from the bondage of sin, their bodies from the prison of the grave, and both from the dungeon of hell. Therefore,

“34. Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas and every thing that moveth therein.”

The mercies of God in Christ are such, that they cannot worthily be praised by any thing less than a universal chorus of the whole old and new creation; and what should such a chorus celebrate, but those mercies by which all things have been made, preserved, and redeemed?

“35. For God will save Sion, and build the cities of Judah, that they, *that is, men*, may dwell there, and have it in possession.”

The salvation and edification of the church followed the passion and resurrection of Christ. “God will save Sion,” that is, the church, which at first consisted of the apostles, who were Jews, and others of that nation by them converted to the faith. “And build the cities of Judah,” or cause churches to arise in all the world, which shall from thenceforth take the names, and inherit the privileges of “Israel and Judah; that men,” even such as God shall call from among the nations, “may dwell there,” as citizens of the new Jerusalem, “and,” instead of the rejected Jews, “have it in their possession.”

“ 36. The seed also of his servants shall inherit it, and they that love his name shall dwell therein.”

The continuation of the church in the posterity of the faithful, is here predicted. Accordingly, the descendants of the proselyted Gentiles have been in possession of the Gospel privileges, for above 1700 years. And thus it will be, while they abide in the faith, and “love the name,” of Jesus. Should the Gentiles apostatize as the Jews did, and the Jews be converted as the Gentiles were, then the Gospel would go from the Gentiles to the Jews, as before it went from the Jews to the Gentiles; then would there “come out of Sion the Deliverer, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” Rom. xi. 26.

PSALM LXX.

The words of this Psalm occur, without any material variations, in Psalm xl. ver. 13. to the end. The reader is therefore referred thither for the exposition.

“ 1. *Make haste*, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD. 2. Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt. 3. Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha! 4. Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified. 5. But I *am* poor and needy; make haste unto me, O God: thou *art* my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying.”

PSALM LXXI.

Fourteenth Day.—Morning Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—The Psalmist, sorely distressed in his old age (see ver. 9. and 18.) by the rebellion of Absalom, which was his great affliction at that period of life, ver. 1. prayeth for the divine assistance; pleading, 2. God's righteousness, 3. and promise; 4. the iniquity of his persecutors; 5, 6. the mercies vouchsafed him from his birth; 7, 8. his being deserted and given up by man; 9. his old age; 10, 11. the taunts and insults of his adversaries; 12. he repeateth his request; 13. prophesieth the downfall of his enemies; declareth, 14. his hope, 15. his gratitude, 16. his faith; 17, 18. wisheth to be preserved, that he might show forth the power and glory of God, whose righteousness and marvellous acts, 19. he extolleth, and thence, 20, 21. promiseth himself a final redemption from all his troubles, and a restoration to honour and comfort; when, 22—24. he shall sing and speak the praises of the Lord.

“ 1. In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion.”

The promises of salvation are made to those who, renouncing all confidence in the world and themselves “trust” in God alone for it. For this reason the Psalmist so often begins his prayer with a declaration of his “faith,” which is to the soul in affliction, what an anchor is to a ship in distress.

“ 2. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me.”

A second argument here used, is the “righteousness of God, who cannot but be faithful and just to his own gracious word. By that word, he had engaged to establish the temporal throne of David,

and the eternal throne of the Son of David. And, by the same word, he has engaged to bring those who believe in him, through sufferings, to glory.

“ 3. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou has given commandment to save me, for thou *art* my rock and my fortress.”

The protection of the Almighty, to which the troubled soul “resorts” by faith and prayer, is compared to that which a well-fortified castle, or town, affords to those within it, in time of war. And the plea, upon which this petition is enforced, is in a manner the same with the former, namely, the declared purpose of God to be the Saviour of his servants; “Thou hast given commandment to save me.”

“ 4. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.”

The divine assistance is implored by the Psalmist, thirdly, on the foot of the goodness of his cause, and the iniquity of his enemies. Such were Absalom, Ahithophel, &c. to David; Judas and the Jews to Christ; and such are the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the Christian. Against them he is to pray and fight continually; ever remembering that wickedness is at least as dangerous when it tempts, as when it persecutes; and can smile, as well as frown, a man dead.

“ 5. For thou *art* my hope, O LORD God; *thou art* my trust from my youth. 6. By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that

took me out of my mother's bowels; my praise *shall be continually of thee.*"

Former mercies are urged, as a fifth motive, for the divine goodness to continue those mercies. The watchful care of heaven over us, at an age when we are able to take no care of ourselves, deserves consideration. The love of Jesus, shown in passing through a state of childhood for us, deserves a still more deep and devout consideration.

"7. I am as a wonder unto many; but thou *art* my strong refuge."

David, banished from his kingdom, was regarded as a "wonder," or a prodigy of wretchedness; Christ, in his state of humiliation upon earth, was a "sign," every where "spoken against," as Simeon foretold he would be: Luke ii. 34. The Christian, who lives by faith, who quits possession for reversion, and who chooses to suffer with his Saviour here, that he may reign with him hereafter, appears to the men of the world, as a monster of folly and enthusiasm. But God is the "strong refuge" of all such.

"8. Let my mouth be filled *with* thy praise, *and with* thy honour, all the day."

Whatever men say, or think of him, the royal prophet desires still to strengthen, and to delight himself in doing the will, singing the praises, and setting forth the glory of God. Such likewise was thy desire, O blessed Jesus! in the days of thy flesh. Ever grant that it may be ours.

“ 9. Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.”

David, mindful of the noble actions which, through God's assistance, he had achieved in his youth, beseeches him not to desert his servant, when persecuted by a rebellious son, in his old age. The weaknesses and temptations peculiar to that time of life, render this a petition necessary for us all to make, before we are overtaken by it. The church findeth but too much occasion to make the same, now that she is sunk in years; when faith languisheth, charity waxeth cold, and the infirmities of a spiritual old age are coming fast upon her.

“ 10. For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul, take counsel together, 11. Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for *there is none to deliver him.*”

They who saw David ascending Mount Olivet in tears, when Absalom had driven him from Jerusalem, and they who beheld Jesus led forth out of the same Jerusalem, to be crucified on Mount Calvary, were tempted to regard both the one and the other, as finally deserted by God. They who view the church, or any member thereof, under affliction and persecution, are too frequently tempted to think the same, and to act accordingly; though they are so plainly taught the contrary, by the restoration of the king of Israel, and the resurrection of the Son of God.

“ 12. O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste to help. 13. Let them, *or*, they shall be confounded *and* consumed, that are adversaries to my

soul; let them, *or*, they shall be covered *with* reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt."

As the insolence of his persecutors increaseth, the distressed monarch crieth more earnestly unto God; and is so far from relinquishing his hope, that, in the midst of his sorrows, he foreseeeth and foretelleth the final confusion of his enemies. The Christian, who hath faith in the promises, may do likewise, in the worst of times, and the worst of circumstances. For the day cometh, when all the workers of wickedness shall be destroyed, and "death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire." Rev. xx. 14.

"14. But I will hope continually and will yet praise thee more and more. 15. My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness *and* thy salvation all the day long: for I know not the numbers *thereof*."

As there is no end to the loving kindness of Jehovah, there should be none to our gratitude. The "hope" of a Christian "giveth songs in the night," and enableth him to be thankful, even in the dark season of affliction. Paul and Silas not only prayed, but also "sang praises to God in a prison, at midnight." Acts xvi. 25.

"16. I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, *even* of thine only."

He who goeth to the battle against his spiritual enemies, should go, confiding not in his own "strength," but in that of the Lord God; not in his own "righteousness," but in that of his Redeemer.

Such a one engageth, with Omnipotence on his side, and cannot but be victorious.

“ 17. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. 18. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not: until I have showed thy strength unto *this* generation, *and* thy power to every one *that* is to come.”

It was the God of Israel, who “taught” David, as a warrior, to conquer, and, as a Psalmist, to “declare the wondrous works” of his great Benefactor. He requests to be preserved in his old age, until, by completing his victories, and his Psalms composed to celebrate them, he had “showed the strength and power of God,” not only to the men of the “generation” in which he lived, but also to “every one that should come,” or arise in after-times, and chant those divine hymns in the assemblies of the faithful, throughout all ages. Doth St. Paul wish to have his life continued upon earth; it is only that he may edify the church, and glorify God. Otherwise, it is far “better,” says he, “to depart and to be with Christ.”

“ 19. Thy righteousness, O God, *is* very high, who hast done great things: O God, who *is* like unto thee !”

What a force is now added to these words, by the actual exaltation of the righteous Saviour “very high” above all heavens, and by the “great things” which he hath “done” for our souls ! Let us think on these things, and we shall most affectionately say,

with David, "O God, who is like unto thee!" Delightful is thy love, O Lord Jesus, beyond all pleasure, more precious than much fine gold, and honourable above the thrones of the mighty! The world languisheth and fadeth away at thy presence, whose beauty is immortal, whose treasures diminish not, and whose glory endureth through the unnumbered ages of eternity.

"20. *Thou*, which hast showed me great and sore trouble, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. 21. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side."

In David, delivered out of his troubles, and restored to his throne, we behold our Lord, after his "great and sore trouble, literally quickened, or revived, brought up again from the depths of the earth, increased in greatness, and comforted on every side." In him we were virtually, by his grace we are actually, raised from sin and sorrow, to righteousness and comfort; and through his power we shall be raised, from dust and corruption, to glory and immortality.

"22. I will also praise thee with the psaltery, *even* thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel! 23. My lips shall greatly rejoice, when I sing unto thee: and my soul, which thou hast redeemed. 24. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long; for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt."

The truth of God, in accomplishing his promises, by the redemption of our souls, and the confusion of our spiritual enemies, is a subject which demands a never-ceasing tribute of gratitude and love, of praise and thanksgiving. To celebrate it aright, with the melody of instruments, voices, and affections, all in perfect concord, is the duty and delight of the church militant; which, when thus employed, affords the best resemblance of the church triumphant.

PSALM LXXII.

ARGUMENT.—David, praying for Solomon, foretelleth his peaceful and glorious reign, and under that figure, in most lively and beautiful colours, portrayeth the kingdom of Messiah; 1—4. its righteous administration; 5. its duration; 6, 7. its blessings; 8. its extent; 9—11. the accession of the Gentiles to it; 12—14. the redemption to be wrought, and, 15. the prayers and praises to be offered up in it; 16. its miraculous increase and fruitfulness; 17. its perpetuity and universality: 18, 19. a doxology is sung to God for it.

“ 1. Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king’s son.* 2. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment.”

In this prophetical prayer, the aged monarch of

* The “king,” and the “king’s son,” are the same person; a character that belongs to none so properly as to Solomon, who was the first prince that was at the same time “king,” and “son of a king.”—MUDGE. Dr. Chandler is of the same opinion.

Israel, about to resign the kingdom into the hands of his son Solomon, makes unto God the request of a wise father for him. He asks such a portion of wisdom and integrity from above, as might enable the young prince to govern aright the people of God, and to exhibit to the world a fair resemblance of that king of Israel, who was, in the fulness of time, to sit upon "the throne of his father David;" Luke i. 32. "to reign in righteousness;" Isa. xxxii. 1. and to have all judgment committed unto him;" John v. 22.

"3. The mountains shall bring, *or*, bear, peace to the people, and the little hills, in, *or*, by righteousness."

In other words, peace, manifested by its consequence, plenteousness, shall be upon all the mountains and little hills of Judea, by means of that righteous judgment which Solomon will execute in the land. And thus, in the days of Messiah, "Beautiful upon the mountains were the feet of them that brought the glad tidings of peace;" which the fruits of the Spirit, in the churches, plainly showed to have been derived from above, through the righteousness of the Redeemer, producing "peace on earth."

"4. He shall judge the poor of the people: he shall save the children of the needy; and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

It is the part of justice, in well-ordered governments, to see that the "poor and needy have right;" to break the teeth of "oppression" and pluck indi-

gence from its devouring jaws. This Christ performed, when, having undertaken the cause of his people against the adversary, he “saved” them by his resurrection, and “broke in pieces” the power of the great oppressor.

“ 5. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.”

The kingdom of Solomon continued, in his own person, only for forty years; but in his seed, that is, Christ, it is established throughout all generations. He reigneth “over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end;” Luke i. 33. His dominion over the world by his providence, and in the church by the influences of his grace, is to be coeval with that of the celestial luminaries in nature. And when the “moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed,” when the heavens shall be dissolved, and the earth burnt up, “the Lord of hosts shall reign on mount Zion,” in the Jerusalem above, in glory everlasting. See Isa. xxiv. 23.

“ 6. He shall come down like the rain upon the mown grass; as showers *that* water the earth.”

Refreshing and salutary, as the drops of heaven to the shorn and parched grass, is the mild administration of a wise and pious prince to his subjects. And what image can convey a better idea of those most beneficial and blessed effects, which followed the descent of the Son of God upon the earth, and that of the Spirit, at the day of Pentecost? The prophets abound with descriptions of those great

events, couched in terms borrowed from the philosophy of rain and dew. See Isa. xliv. 3. lv. 10. Hos. xiv. 5. Heb. vi. 7. In the last words of David, the reign of Messiah is described under this figure. He shall be as "the tender grass, springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." I cannot help subjoining bishop Sherlock's masterly illustration of this passage—"There cannot be a more lively image of a flourishing condition, than what is conveyed to us in these words. The grass, which is forced by the heat of the sun, before the ground is well prepared by rain, is weak and languid, and of a faint complexion; but when clear shining succeeds the gentle showers of spring, the field puts forth its best strength, and is more beautifully arrayed, than even Solomon in all his glory." Disc. vol. v. p. 89.

"7. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth."

By means of rain and dew, the grass springeth out of the ground. In the kingdom of Solomon, through the influences of his wisdom, good men were encouraged, righteousness flourished, and the land enjoyed tranquillity. In the days of Messiah, the fruit of the Spirit of righteousness, and the fruit of righteousness was "abundance of peace." He was the true "Melchisedek," or "King of Righteousness," and therefore the true Solomon, the "King of Salem, the prince of peace." And his peace is to endure, when the moon shall have ceased to vary her appearances, and when a period shall be put to all sublunary vicissitudes.

“ 8. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth; or, land.”

As applicable to the kingdom of Solomon, this verse describes the extent and limits of the promised “ land;” if it be interpreted of the wide extended empire of Christ, that empire knows no bounds, but those of the “ earth” itself. The Hebrew word ארץ, is often used for both, and as the dominion of Solomon represented that of a greater than Solomon, both are comprehended in the same words. And it is observable that when the Prophet Zechariah foretels the advent of “ the King of Sion,” in great humility, “ meek, and riding on an ass,” he describes the extent of his kingdom in these words— “ His dominion shall be even from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.” Zech. ix. 9, 10.

“ 9. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him : and his enemies shall lick the dust.”

Distant nations submitted themselves to the sceptre, and prostrated themselves before the throne of Solomon, foreshowing the conversion of the heathen world, (in the figurative language of prophecy, frequently styled, “ the wilderness”) to the Gospel, and the lowly adoration to be made by penitent sinners, at the footstool of the King of glory. They who take not the advantage of the day of Grace, will feel the rod of his power in the day of vengeance, when his “ enemies” shall be subjected to him ; when death himself shall be destroyed ; and

“dust shall be the serpent’s meat.” Isa. lxxv. 25.
Gen. iii. 14.

“10. The kings of Tarshish, and of the isles, shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.”

This verse suggesteth to our meditation several curious and interesting particulars, all tending to one and the same end. As, 1. The munificent presents and immense treasures, brought to Solomon from Tarshish, and the isles of the Gentiles: 1 Kings x. 22, &c. 2. The coming of the queen of Sheba from the south, with her gifts and acknowledgments, to Jerusalem. 3. The offerings made by the eastern magi, as the first-fruits of the Gentiles, to the Saviour of the world. And, lastly, the accession of the nations to the faith (even these “isles of the Gentiles”) bringing their glory and honour into the city of God. See Isa. xlix. lx. Rev. xxi. 24.

“11. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him.”

It is said, 2 Chron. ix. that “all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom; that he reigned over all the kings, from the river even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt; and that they brought unto him horses out of Egypt, and out of all lands.” The dominion of Christ is universal; and it will appear to be so at the last day; when, before men and angels, he shall prove his claim to the title, “King of kings, and Lord of lords.”

“ 12. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and *him* that hath no helper. 13. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. 14. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight.”

These three verses, considered as describing the just and merciful administration of Solomon, need no exposition. As prophetic of Messiah's reign, they may be thus connected with the context, and paraphrased—The kings and the nations of the earth shall accede to the church of Christ, induced so to do by the fame of his mercy, no less than by that of his majesty. They shall hear of the great deliverance wrought by him for the poor in spirit, who make their prayer unto him, confessing their sins, and acknowledging the inability of any creature, in heaven or earth, to recover them from their lost estate. These he shall spare, and pardon, and save from sin, and from death, and from hell. He shall, for this purpose, break the snares, and destroy the power, of their great oppressor, the devil; and so dear shall their blood be in his sight, that he shall shed his own for it; after which, arising to a new and immortal life, he shall accomplish the eternal redemption of his servants.

“ 15. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer also shall be made for him continually, *and* daily shall he be praised.”

As Solomon's reign was long and prosperous, that

of Messiah is everlasting and glorious: as the rich brought presents to the one; so the nations offered up themselves, their possessions, their souls and their bodies, to the other: as the former was continually “prayed for,” and blessed by his subjects, who owed peace and plenteousness to his government; so, with regard to the latter, prayer is made ever in the church, for the increase and consummation of his kingdom; and “daily is he praised,” by his people, for all the riches of grace, for all the comforts of the Spirit, and for all the hopes of glory, which they possess, and enjoy, through him.

“16. There shall be an handful of corn in the earth, upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and *they* of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth.”

It is here foretold, that in the days of Solomon, wonderful shall be the fruitfulness of Judea; of the country in corn, by which the city is supported; and of the city in people, who, by their numbers, constitute the strength of the king. The fruitfulness of the country was to be so great, that from an “handful of corn,” and that sown on the most barren spot, the “top of a mountain,” should issue a produce, the ears of which would “shake” and wave in the winds, like the woods of “Lebanon;” while in the city, a fresh progeny of Israelites was still springing up, and advancing to maturity, like the unnumbered blades of grass, in a field which the Lord hath blessed: see 1 Kings iv. 20, &c. Such, under the reign of King Messiah, was the amazing increase of the “word,” when sown in hearts bar-

ren before; such the astonishing multiplication of citizens in the Christian church: as it is written, Acts vi. 7. “And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly.” So let it be, blessed Lord, where-soever thy Gospel is preached, throughout the world.

“17. His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued, *Heb.* propagated, as long as the sun; and *men* shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.”

The person and kingdom of Solomon have been used all along as a channel, through which to convey a most illustrious prophecy concerning those of Christ. But here the type seems to be wholly absorbed in the great antitype. His “name,” his saving name, “shall indeed endure for ever, propagated,” with the faith, through all the generations of men, while the “sun,” another of his representatives, shall continue to maintain his station in the heavens, and to diffuse his light upon the earth. In Him, as it was promised to Abraham, shall all the true children of Abraham be “blessed” with the blessings of eternity; “all nations shall call Him blessed,” as they are taught to do in the remaining verses of this exalted composition.

“18. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things. 19. And blessed *be* his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled *with* his glory: Amen, and Amen.”

Blessed, therefore, be thou, O Lord Jesus! for thou art the Lord God, even the God of Israel, who hast wrought such miracles of mercy, for the salvation of the church: and blessed, by the tongues of men and angels, be thy holy and glorious name; and let the whole earth be filled with the amazingly transcendent and inconceivable majesty of thy most excellent glory, for evermore! So be it, so be it.

PSALM LXXIII.

Fourteenth Day.—Evening Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—The person speaking in this Psalm relates, 1—3. the process of a temptation, occasioned by his beholding the prosperity of wicked men upon earth, which he describes, 4—11. with, 12—14. the suggestions of nature on the occasion; but, in opposition to these, grace urges, 15. the examples of saints, 16. the difficulty of judging concerning God's dispensations, and, above all, 17—20. the final issue of things at the last day, and the end of that prosperity, which had excited his envy. Perfectly satisfied with these considerations, 21, 22. he owns his uneasiness to have sprung from his ignorance; and, 23—28. closes the Psalm with the most affectionate expressions of his full trust and confidence in the divine mercy and goodness. No temptation is more common, or more formidable, than that above-mentioned. A more powerful and effectual antidote to it cannot be devised, than this most instructive and beautiful Psalm affords.

“1. Truly God is good to Israel, *even to such as are of a clean heart.*”

This declaration seems to be the result of a long struggle in the mind of the Psalmist, between nature and grace, in which the latter proves victorious, and notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, de-

termines, against the suggestions of the former, that God is the same good and merciful God to his church and people, if they do but preserve inviolable their fidelity to him, whether, in this world, they enjoy prosperity, or endure affliction.

“ 2. But as for me, my feet were almost gone : my steps had well nigh slipt. 3. For I was envious at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

Temptations impede the progress of the Christian in the way of righteousness, and incline him to fall ; as it happens to one who walks in a slippery path. The temptation here complained of, is that excited by seeing wealth and honour in the hands of infidelity and villany, while the faithful servants of God are covered with infamy, and oppressed by poverty. A prospect of this sort is apt to make us distrust the love of heaven towards us, and its providence over us. For our benefit, therefore, in the course of this Psalm, the disease is particularized, and the remedy prescribed.

“ 4. For *there are* no bands, *or*, pangs, in their death, but their strength *is* firm.”

Health and strength are to be reckoned among those temporal blessings, which the long suffering of God sometimes permits the ungodly to enjoy. And accordingly we find men of that cast who live without sickness, and die in a manner without pain : while others, of a contrary character, are worn with chronical, or racked with acute disorders, which bring them with sorrow and torment to the grave.

“ 5. They *are* not in trouble as *other* men : neither are they plagued like *other* men.”

Calamities, which overwhelm the small concerns of the poor righteous man, approach not the borders of the wealthy sinner. Far from poverty, as free from disease, he seems to pass his days exempted from the miseries of mankind, without labour or anxiety : and not so much as to think of those who, distressed on all sides, can scarcely earn their bread by the sweat of their brows. See this sentiment beautifully dilated, Job xxi. See also Jer. xii. 1.

“ 6. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain ; violence covereth them *as* a garment.”

Among men who have not the love of God in their hearts, or his fear before their eyes, pride and oppression are the offspring of worldly prosperity. The daughters attend the mother, wherever she goeth, and show themselves openly without reserve : “ pride compasseth them about as a chain ;” they wear it for an ornament about their necks, as gold chains, collars, or necklaces, were worn ; see Cant. iv. 9. discovering it by their stately carriage ; see Isa. iii. 16. “ Violence covereth them as a garment ;” it appeareth outwardly in all they say or do, and engrosseth the whole man ; they are, as the English phrase is, “ made up of it.”

“ 7. Their eyes stand out with fatness : they have more than heart could wish.”

“ A man may be known by his look,” saith the son of Sirach, Eccclus xix. 29. The choleric, the

lascivious, the melancholy, the cunning, &c. &c. frequently bear their tempers and ruling passions strongly marked on their countenances: but more especially doth the soul of a man look forth at his “eyes.” The “pride” of the ungodly, occasioned by great and unexpected success in the world, hardly ever fails to bewray itself in this way.

“8. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression: they speak loftily.”

Prosperity, in an irreligious heart, breeds “corruption,” which from thence is emitted by the breath in conversation, to infect and taint the minds of others. A circle of fawning dependants is never wanting, to whom the poor, vain, and ignorant wretch, exalted in his own conceit above the level of mortality, may, from the chair, without control, dictate libertinism and infidelity, bidding defiance to the laws of God and man.

“9. They set their mouth against the heavens; and their tongue walketh through the earth.”

The blessings for which a Christian praises his God, only cause the infidel to blaspheme him. So true is that of Solomon—“The prosperity of fools destroyeth them.” What a pity is it, that the former should ever be less zealous and indefatigable in diffusing his piety, than we know the latter is in propagating his blasphemies through the earth!

“10. Therefore his people return thither; and waters of a full *cup* are wrung out to them.”

It seemeth impossible to ascertain, with any de-

gree of precision, the meaning of this verse, or to whom it relates. Some think it intends those people who resort to the company of the wicked, because they find their temporal advantage by it; while others are of opinion, that the people of God are meant, who, by continually revolving in their thoughts the subject here treated of, namely, the prosperity of the wicked, are sore grieved, and enforced to shed tears in abundance. Mr. Mudge translates the verse thus—"Therefore let his (God's) people come before them, and waters in full measure would be wrung out from them;" that is, "Should God's people fall into their hands, they would squeeze them to the full, they would wring out all the juice in their bodies." He takes "waters in full measure" to have been a proverbial expression.

"11. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?"

They who interpret the foregoing verse of the people of God, tempted by the success of the ungodly to distrust his providence, suppose this and the following verses to be uttered by "them," as questioning whether God had any regard to what passed here below. But, to avoid confusion of persons, I would rather suppose the foregoing verse (to whomsoever it may belong) to be parenthetical, and the verse now under consideration to be an epicurean, atheistical speech in the mouth of the wicked, above described at large; after which the Psalmist goes on, in his own person, as from the beginning, to relate the temptation which he underwent, and the issue of it.

“ 12. Behold, these *are* the ungodly who prosper in the world, they increase *in* riches.”

The temptation is now stated in its full force. “ These” worthless, ungodly, blasphemous wretches, whose characters I have been delineating, “ these” are the men who prosper in the world, who succeed in every thing they undertake, and roll in riches ! What are we to think of God, his providence, and his promises?

“ 13. Verily, I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency: 14. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.”

Nature will be apt upon this occasion to suggest, that all my faith, my charity, and my devotion, all my watching, and fastings, in short, all the labour and pains I have taken in the way of goodness, have been altogether vain and fruitless: since, while the rebellious enemies of God enjoy the world and themselves at pleasure, I, who continue his servant, am in perpetual tribulation and affliction.

“ 15. If I say, I will speak, *or*, declare, *or* preach, thus; behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children.”

The Psalmist, having thus particularized the disease, proceeds now, like a skilful physician of the soul, to prescribe a medicine for it, which is compounded of many salutary ingredients. And first, to the suggestion of nature, grace opposes the examples of the children of God, who never fell from their hope in another world, because of their sufferings in this. For a man, therefore, to distrust the divine

goodness on that account, is to belie the hope, renounce their faith, and strike his name out of their list.

“ 16. When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me.”

A second reason why a man should not be too forward to arraign God's dispensations of injustice, is the extreme difficulty of understanding and comprehending the whole of them, which indeed is not to be done by the human mind, unless God himself shall vouchsafe it the necessary information. “ It was too painful for me,” says the Psalmist,

“ 17. Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end.”

The third argument, with which we may repress the spirit of murmuring and distrust, so apt to be excited by the prosperity of the wicked, is one communicated to us by the word of God, which alone can acquaint us with what is to be the “end,” the final portion of sinners at the last day. This is an arrow from the heavenly quiver, which brings down our enemy at once, and lays Dagon prostrate before the ark.

“ 18. Surely thou didst, *or* dost, set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.”

Worldly prosperity is as the narrow and slippery summit of a mountain, on which, to answer the designs of his providence, God permits the wicked, during his pleasure, to take their station; till at

length the fatal hour arrives, when, by a stroke unseen, they fall from thence, and are lost in the fathomless ocean of sorrow, torment, and despair.

“ 19. How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment ! they are utterly consumed with terrors.”

The sudden alteration which death makes in the state of a powerful and opulent sinner, cannot but affect all around him, though they behold but one part of it. How much more would they be astonished and terrified, if the curtain between the two worlds was undrawn, and the other half of the change disclosed to view ! Let faith do that which sight cannot do ; and then the ungodly, however wealthy and honourable, will surely cease to be the objects of our envy.

20. As a dream when *one* awaketh, so, O LORD, when thou awakest, *or*, causest them to awake, thou shalt despise their image.”

The life of the ungodly is a sleep ; their happiness a dream, illusive and transitory ; at best a shadow ; afterwards, nothing. At the day of death, the soul is roused out of this sleep, and the dream vanishes. When God shall thus awaken them, he will “ despise their image,” he will bring to nought, and render utterly contemptible, even in their own sight, as well as that of himself, of his holy angels, and the spirits of the righteous, those imaginary and fantastic pleasures, for which they have lost the substantial joys and glories of his heavenly kingdom. Now, therefore, while it will not be in vain, “ Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ

shall give thee light:" Ephes. v. 14. See Job xx. 4, &c. Isa. xxix. 8.

" 21. Thus my heart was grieved, *Heb.* in a ferment, and I was pricked in my reins. 22. So foolish *was* I, and ignorant: I was *as* a beast before thee."

The Psalmist fully satisfied with the conduct of providence, reflects upon the folly of his former uneasiness, and humbly owns, that his doubts were occasioned solely by his ignorance of God's ways; while he formed his judgment of them without having duly taken into consideration the final issue of things. The last day, when it comes, will bring with it a solution of all difficulties. He who bears impressed upon his mind such an idea of that day, as the Scriptures can give him, may solve them now.

" 23. Nevertheless, I *am* continually with thee; thou hast holden *me* by my right hand."

The remainder of the Psalm contains the most dutiful and affectionate expressions of a mind perfectly at ease, and reposing itself, with comfortable assurance, on the loving kindness of the Lord, of which it had experienced a fresh instance, in its support under the late temptation, and complete victory over it. "I am continually with thee," as a child under the tender care of a parent; and, as a parent, during my danger of falling in a slippery path, "thou hast holden me," thy child, "by my right hand."

" 24. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me *to* glory."

He who, but a little while ago, seemed to question the providence of God over the affairs of men, now exults in happy confidence of the divine mercy and favour towards himself, nothing doubting but that grace would ever continue to guide him upon earth till glory should crown him in heaven. Such are the blessed effects of “going into the sanctuary,” and consulting the “lively oracles” in all our doubts, difficulties, and temptations.

“25. Whom have I in heaven *but thee*? And *there is none upon earth that I desire beside, Heb. with, or, in comparison of, thee.*”

The believing soul seems here to speak in the person and with the affection of a spouse, declaring, that not only earth, but heaven itself, would be unsatisfactory and comfortless, without the presence of her beloved Redeemer, the God of her salvation. But there is a pathos in the words themselves, which though the Christian feels, the commentator cannot express.

“26. My flesh and my heart faileth; *but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*”

None of these things, in the abundance of which the wicked place their happiness, can deliver us in the day of death. “Flesh” must revert to dust, and the “heart” must cease its beating. He alone, therefore, is the proper object of our faith and love, who can support, and carry us through the dreadful hour, and then raise us again, to be our “portion for ever.” Lord Jesus, who hast so graciously pro-

mised to become our portion in the next world, prevent us from choosing any other in this.

“ 27. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed, *or*, wilt destroy, all them that go a whoring from thee.”

They who are “ far from God,” are just so far from salvation; and of course, if they remain in that situation, must “ perish.” Nor have they reason to expect any other fate, who in their hearts depart from the holy Jesus, after he has betrothed them to himself in righteousness; and prefer to him the vilest and basest of his enemies, the world and the flesh, by whose wicked hands he was crucified and slain.

“ 28. But *it is* good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the LORD God, that I may declare all thy works.”

As if the Psalmist had said, in other words—Hear, therefore, the conclusion of the whole matter. Let others, dazzled by the blaze of worldly prosperity, forsake God, to obtain a share of it; or murmur against him, because they cannot obtain it. I am persuaded, it now is, and finally will be, “ good,” delightful, profitable, and honourable, “ for me to draw near,” and join myself “ to him;” which, in this life, I can do no otherwise, than by believing and hoping in his holy name; “ I will put my trust in the Lord God,” and excite others to do the same by “ declaring his works,” and dispensations; that all may perceive what an amazing difference will one day be made, between him who lusteth after the creature, and him who loveth the Creator.

PSALM LXXIV.

ARGUMENT.—Upon whatever occasion this Psalm might have been originally composed, it is plainly intended for the use of the church in time of persecution. 1. She bemoans herself as deserted by God; the return of whose favour she entreats, 2. on account of his having redeemed her; 3—9. of the ravages made, and, 10. the reproaches thrown out, by the enemy; 11—15. she reminds him of the wonders formerly wrought in her behalf, and, 16, 17. of his power and goodness, manifested in the common course of nature; 19. of the relation in which she stands to him; 20. of his covenant; 21, 22. of the honour of his name, and, 23. the increasing fury of her adversaries, just ready to swallow her up.

“ 1. O God, why hast thou cast *us* off for ever? *why* doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?”

God not only permits, but, by his prophet, who indited this form of words, directs the church, under persecution, to expostulate with him for having, to all appearance, finally deserted her. And that, in such deplorable circumstances, she may move his compassion, and, as it were, revive his love towards her, she is taught to remind him of that endearing relation which once subsisted between him and his people, the relation of a “shepherd” to his “sheep.” The soul, when led into captivity, and detained in it, by a prevailing lust or passion, may make her prayer likewise in these words, adapted to her case.

“ 2. Remember thy congregation *which* thou hast purchased of old; the rod, *or* tribe, or portion, of thine inheritance, *which* thou hast redeemed; this mount Sion, wherein thou hast dwelt.”

The Israelitish church pleads for mercy, upon these considerations, that God had formerly vouchsafed to redeem her from the Egyptian bondage, and to fix his residence on mount Sion, all which would prove to have been done in vain, should he leave her, at last, in the hands of her enemies. The redemption by Jesus Christ, and his habitation in the church Christian by his Spirit, are the corresponding arguments to be urged, on similar occasions, by her, and by the believing soul.

“ 3. Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations: *even* all *that* the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.”

God is represented as having withdrawn himself, and departed afar off; he is therefore entreated to return without delay, to view the long-lasting desolations of the once highly favoured city, and the ravages made by aliens in the sanctuary; which could not but excite in him compassion for his people, and indignation against their enemies. The outward calamities of a persecuted church should cause us to reflect on the sad havoc and devastation made by sin and Satan in the soul, which before was the city and temple of the living God.

“ 4. Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations, *or*, places of worship; they set up their ensigns *for* signs.”

No sound can be more shocking than the confused clamours of an heathen army sacking the temple; no sight so afflicting, as that of “the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place.” Turbulent

passions are the enemies which raise an uproar of confusion in the heart; wealth, power, and pleasure, are the idols which profane that sanctuary.

“5. *A man* was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. 6. But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers.”

The difficulty of these verses lies altogether in the first word, צִיִּי, without which, their literal construction is as follows—“As he who lifted up axes in the thick wood, so now they,” the enemies above-mentioned “break down the carved work thereof,” of the sanctuary, “with hatches and hammers.” Some interpreters render צִיִּי, impersonally; not He “was famous,” but “It is well known,” it is manifest, O God, to all the world, “that as he who lifteth up axes, so now,” &c. Or may not the sense be—as צִיִּי, a knowing skilful person, one who understands his business, lifted up the axe in the thick wood, so now men set themselves to work to demolish the ornaments and timbers of the sanctuary.” The words suggest another reason why God should arise and have mercy upon Sion, lest his name should be blasphemed among the nations, when they saw and heard of the sacrilegious and horrible destruction wrought by the enemy; whom neither the majesty of the temple, nor the reverence of its divine inhabitant, could restrain from defacing the beauty of holiness. The ornaments of the internal and spiritual temple, sometimes suffer as much from the fury of inordinate affections, as the carved work of the sanctuary ever did from the armies of Nebuchadnezzar or Antiochus.

“7. They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled *or*, desecrated, *by casting down*, the dwelling-place of thy name to the ground.”

The gates of the second temple were set on fire by Antiochus; see 1 Mac. iv. 38. but the whole fabric of the first was burnt by Nebuchadnezzar. When animosities break forth, and contentions are raised in the church, “fire is cast into the sanctuary; when the soul sinks under the temptation, the dwelling-place of God’s name is desecrated to the ground.”

“8. They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land.”

Such is the rage of infidels, when it pleases God for the sins of his people, to let them loose upon the church as beasts of prey. From scenes like these, we learn the temper and disposition of that raging adversary of mankind and his associates; who, if permitted, would root Christianity out of every heart “Watch, therefore, and pray,” saith the Captain of our salvation to all his soldiers.

“9. We see not our signs, *there is no more any prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.*”

Darkness is horrible in itself, and adds horror to every thing else. The church therefore complains that, in the midst of all her other troubles, she was deserted by the light of heaven. No “signs” or miracles, were exhibited for her comfort: there was no “prophet,” to inform her concerning the will of God, or to promise her an “end” of her afflictions,

as Daniel did when she was a captive in Babylon. Sin darkens the understanding, taking from it that light, the direction of which it then stands most in need of.

“ 10. O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? 11. Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? Pluck *it* out of thy bosom.”

To an enumeration of calamities succeeds a prayer for deliverance, grounded on the necessity of God's vindicating the honour of his name from the insolent and blasphemous reproaches and scoffs of the enemy: see Ezek. xx. 19. He is therefore, entreated to make bare his arm in the sight of the nations, and to let his right hand become glorious in the vindication of his name, and the defence of his inheritance.

“ 12. For God *is* my king of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.”

And that he will do so, there is always reason for the afflicted church to hope: because, as her “ King,” he conducted and protected her of old, and wrought “ salvation” for her upon the earth; temporal salvation by the hand of Moses; eternal salvation by the power of Christ.

“ 13. Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength; thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.”

The first part of this verse alludes to that marvellous act of omnipotence, which divided the Red Sea, for Israel to pass over; the second part, to the return of its waves upon the heads of the Egyptians, who, like so many sea monsters, opening their mouths to

devour the people of God, were overwhelmed, and perished in the mighty waters. The Christian church is taught to contemplate, under this figure, the salvation of her children, and the destruction of their spiritual enemies, by the waters of baptism: see 1 Cor. x. 2. and the Office of Baptism in the Church of England. Parallel to this passage in our Psalm, is that most sublime one, Isa. li. 9, 10, 11. "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord! awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it, that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it, that hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? Therefore, the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come singing into Sion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

"14. Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, *and* gavest him *to be* meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness."

"Leviathan" stands for Pharaoh, or the Egyptian power, represented by the Egyptian animal, the crocodile of Nile, the Egyptian river. The "heads of leviathan" are the princes of Egypt, the leaders of the Egyptian armies. And "the people, or inhabitants, of the wilderness," to whom they were given for a prey, are not men, but a species of wild beasts, hunting the deserts, for which the word לַחֲסִידִים is used, Isa. xiii. 21. and xxxiv. 14. The sense therefore is, that the bodies of Pharaoh and his captains were

thrown on shore by the sea, and so became food for the wild beasts of the neighbouring deserts. The final destruction of the adversaries of Messiah's kingdom is described at large under a like image, Rev. xix. 17, &c.

“ 15. Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood—*that is, draw forth the fountain and the flood, by cleaving the rock*—thou driedst up mighty rivers.”

Two other remarkable exertions of the divine power in favour of the Israelites, are here referred to. Water was brought out of the rock, to satisfy their thirst in the time of drought; and the river Jordan was dried up, to open a passage for them into Canaan. In the former of these transactions, faith beholds the water of life springing from the Rock of Salvation; in the latter are discerned the mystic death and resurrection of Christians, as a prelude to the corporeal; when, rising from the depths of the grave, they shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

“ 16. The day is thine, the night also is thine, thou hast prepared the light and the sun. 17. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter.”

From the miraculous interpositions of God, in behalf of his people, the church passes to those ordinary and standing evidences of his goodness towards us, the sweet vicissitudes of light and darkness, and the grateful succession of times and seasons; by which man is taught, in the most sorrowful night, to look for a joyful morning; and, during the severest winter, to expect a reviving spring. Thus is the

revolving year our constant instructor and monitor; incessantly inculcating the duties of faith and hope, as well as those of adoration, gratitude, and praise.

“18. Remember this, *that* the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and *that* the foolish people have blasphemed thy name. 19. O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude *of the wicked*; forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever.”

After endeavouring to support her own faith, and excite the zeal of God for his inheritance, by a rehearsal of former mercies, the church again argues the argument of “reproach,” touched on before at ver. 10. and then reminds her Saviour of that endearing appellation of his “turtle-dove,” by which he had not disdained to address her in times past. This turtle-dove, simple, defenceless, solitary, meek, timid, and mournful, was in danger of being speedily devoured by her inveterate and implacable enemies; who, like birds of prey, beset her on all sides, thirsting impatiently for her blood. What an irresistible force do these circumstances give to the words—“O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked; and forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever!” Let us not fail in the hour of temptation, to use them, and try the success of them.

“20. Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth, *or*, the land, are full of the habitations of cruelty.”

The main anchor of the holy ark, in storms and tempests, is faith in the covenant of grace, made from

the beginning in Messiah; communicated to Noah, Abraham, David, &c. as his illustrious representatives, and in them to the house of Israel; accomplished (as Zacharias beareth witness by his song, Luke i. 72, &c.) at the birth of Christ, and then extended to the Gentiles. To this covenant, and the promises made therein, the church here appeals, at a time when the enemy ravaged the promised land at pleasure, and every thing seemed to forebode the utter extirpation of the law and people of God. Hither, therefore, the soul is to fly for refuge, when nothing else seems capable of affording any.

“ 21. O let not the oppressed return ashamed; let the poor and needy praise thy name.”

It is for the honour of God, that they who have recourse to him for help, should not, by “returning” without it, suffer “shame” and confusion, in the presence of their insulting adversaries. And another motive to engage his assistance is, that, for every lost soul, there would be a voice the less in that choir, which is to “praise his name” to all eternity.

“ 22. Arise, O God, plead thine own cause; remember how the foolish man blasphemeth thee daily. 23. Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.”

The church, growing more importunate in her petitions, as the danger increases, beseeches God to appear in her cause, as being in effect his own, on account of his promises, his attributes of righteousness and truth, and the reproaches cast on Him,

through his people. While speaking, she seems to hear the tumultuous clamours of the approaching enemy, growing every minute louder as they advance: and we leave the “turtle-dove,” without the divine assistance, ready to sink under the talons of the rapacious eagle.

PSALM LXXV.

Fifteenth Day.—Morning Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—The prophet, 1. gives thanks, with the church, to God for the manifestation of his Name, and the wonders of salvation wrought thereby. 2. He declares his resolution of executing judgment and justice in his kingdom, which, 3. had been in disorder and confusion; 4, 5. he rebukes the wicked; 6—8. reminds them of the power, providence, counsels, and judgments of God; 9, 10. he concludes with repeating his resolution to praise God, to break the power of wickedness, and establish righteousness.

“ 1. Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near, thy wondrous works declare.”

The church offers up her repeated praises to God for deliverance; she acknowledges the presence of his Name in the midst of her, which had been evidenced by the “wonderful works” wrought for her salvation. Upon whatever occasion these words were originally endited, the Christian church now celebrates in them that great deliverance which, by so many miracles of mercy and power, hath been accomplished for her through Messiah, who is in Scripture

frequently styled, "the NAME of Jehovah." See Isa. xxx. 27.

"2. When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly."

The first verse was spoken by many persons; "unto thee, O God, do WE give thanks;" here the speaker is one, and that one is plainly a ruler, who promises, that when he shall have "received the congregation," or, as some render it, "when he shall have gotten an appointed, or fit time, or season," that is, when he shall be established in power and authority, at a fit time and place, he will "judge uprightly," and introduce a thorough reformation into a kingdom, which, as we shall find by the following verse, stood greatly in need of it. From these circumstances it should seem most probable, that David is speaking of his advancement to the throne of Israel, and the intended rectitude of his administration, when he should be settled thereon. What David did in Israel, was done in the church universal, by him who sat upon the throne of David, when he "received," for his inheritance, the great "congregation" of the Gentiles, and the earth was full of the "righteousness" of Jehovah.

"3. The earth, *or*, the land, and all the inhabitants thereof, are, *or*, were, dissolved; I bear up the pillars of it."

Civil distractions, and the continual irruptions of foreign enemies, had thrown the Israelitish affairs into confusion, and "dissolved" the frame of government; until, by the re-establishment of royal autho-

rity, countenance and support were again given to all the subordinate magistrates; who are, in their respective stations, the “pillars” of a community. Such was the universal corruption and dissolution of manners both among Jews and Gentiles, when Messiah, entering upon his regal office, reformed the world, raised the glorious fabric of the church, and made his apostles and their successors the “pillars” of his spiritual kingdom. Let men support religion, and God will support them.

“4. I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly; and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: 5. Lift not up your horn on high; speak not *with* a stiff neck.”

“Where the word of a king is, there is power.” The prophet addresses himself to the opposers of his government, and the disturbers of Israel: he urges the “folly” of exalting themselves against their prince; and exhorts them, for their own sakes, to humility and obedience. Is not this the very message which the ministers of Christ have received from their King, and are commanded to deliver to the world?

“6. For promotion *cometh* neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south: 7. But God *is* the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another.”

The opposition, mentioned in the preceding verse, was called “folly.” In these verses it is proved to be such; as being an opposition, in effect, to the counsels of heaven; for, not by worldly power or craft,

but by the designation and providence of God himself, the supreme judge of princes, and disposer of kingdoms, was the house of Saul “put down,” and the house of David “set up.” And are not, then, the enemies of the Son of God in arms against the Father; who, according to the promises going before concerning him, hath highly exalted him; hath committed all power and judgment to him; and hath put all things under his feet? Yea, and the hour is coming, when he shall put down all rule, and all authority, and power, and the Lord Jesus alone shall be exalted in that day. What will then be the portion of his impenitent adversaries, the next verse will inform us.

“8. For in the hand of the Lord *there is* a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring *them* out, and drink *them*.”

As the choicest of heavenly blessings are frequently in Scripture represented by the salutary effects of wine, a cup of which the master of the family is supposed to hold in his hand, ready to distribute due portions of it to those around him; so from the noxious and intoxicating qualities of that liquor, when drunk strong, and in too large a quantity, is borrowed a most tremendous image of the wrath and indignation of Almighty God. Calamity and sorrow, fear and trembling, infatuation and despair, the evils of the present life, and of that which is to come, are the bitter ingredients which compose this most horrible cup of mixture. It is entirely in the hand and dis-

posals of God, who, through every age, has been pouring out, and administering of its contents, more or less, in proportion to the sins of men. But much of the strength and power of the liquor still remains behind, until the day of final vengeance. It will be then exhausted, even to the dregs, by unrepenting rebels; when “burning coals, fire, and brimstone,” and eternal “tempest,” shall be “the portion of their cup.” Ps. xi. 6.

“9. But I will declare for ever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.”

These dispensations of mercy and judgment the prophet resolves to “declare” to the world for ever, by thus “singing” the works and the “praises” of God, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. And while we now sing them, we declare our resolution to be the same with his.

“10. All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; *but* the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.”

He determines likewise, as every good governor should do, to exert the authority with which he was intrusted; to break the power of triumphant wickedness, and to exalt that righteousness which exalteth a nation; hereby rendering himself a fit image of Him, who hath since done away transgression, and brought in everlasting righteousness, who will one day turn the wicked into hell, and exalt his faithful servants to reign with him in heaven. Already he reigns in them upon earth; causing “all carnal affections to die in them, and all things belonging to the Spirit to live and grow in them.”

PSALM LXXVI.

ARGUMENT.—It is obvious, at first sight, to any one who reads this Psalm, that it was composed, as a thanksgiving hymn, on account of some great deliverance, wrought for his people, by the immediate hand of God. The miraculous destruction of the Assyrian army by the angel, in the days of king Hezekiah, is generally pitched upon, as the subject of it, and affirmed to be so by the ancient Greek inscription prefixed to it in the LXX version. The prophet, 1, 2. declares the glory which God hath gotten him in Israel; 3—6. describes the circumstances of the deliverance, with, 7. a reflection thereupon; 8—10. he mentions the effects it had produced among the nations, and, 11, 12. those which it ought to produce in Israelitish hearts. The ideas are to be transferred to the salvation of the church universal, by the destruction of sin and Satan, and the overthrow of the persecuting powers.

“1. In Judah *is* God known; his name *is* great in Israel. 2. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Sion.”

On occasion of some great deliverance, the prophet speaks in transport concerning that presence and protection of God, which the highly favoured Judah once enjoyed. She enjoyed them while she continued faithful, and really was what she professed to be. But, on account of her infidelity, and rejection of her Messiah, an alteration of circumstances has taken place. They are no longer Jews, who are such outwardly; nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but they are Jews, who believe in the Son of God; and they are of the circumcision, who are cleansed by him from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. The Gentile Christian church hath succeeded to the privileges of the Israelitish. In her now “God is known” by the Gospel; and “his

Name is great" in her, by reason of all the mighty wonders which he hath wrought for her : she is the true "Salem," or city of peace ; she is the true "Sion," the spiritual, holy, and beloved hill ; and in her is the "tabernacle" and "dwelling place" of God her Saviour, by the Spirit.

"3. There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle."

When God appeared in the defence of his ancient people, the weapons of their enemies were at once blunted and broken, and all the formidable apparatus of war became, in a moment, utterly useless. Such was the event, when the holy Jesus entered the lists against our spiritual adversaries, "for" us ; and such ever will be the event, when he engages them "in" us.

"4. Thou *art* more glorious *and* excellent than the mountains of prey."

This may be a beautiful apostrophe to mount Sion (mentioned ver. 2.) as appearing infinitely more glorious and excellent, through the favour and protection of her God, than the arm of flesh and the instruments of war could render the kingdoms of the earth, which set themselves against her ; and which, for their tyranny, and cruelty, and the ravages committed by them, are likened to those mountains, where beasts of prey, with similar dispositions, rove, and roar, and devour. The powers of the world "make war with the Lamb, whose station is upon mount Sion ;" but "the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings ; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." Rev. xiv. 1. xvii. 14.

“ 5. The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep : and none of the men of might have found their hands. 6. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot, *or*, rider, and horse, are cast into a dead sleep.”

It must be acknowledged, that these two verses seem in a very particular manner to point at the miraculous destruction of Sennacherib's army, when the “ stout-hearted,” who doubted not of taking and spoiling the holy city, were themselves suddenly “ spoiled” of strength and life ; they “ slept their sleep, and found not their hands ;” they awaked not again to the use of their powers and faculties ; a rebuking blast was sent from the God of Jacob, under which the flower of Assyria withered in the space of a night, and in the morning was no more ; “ the horse and his rider were cast into a dead sleep ;” they slept the sleep of death. How, in a moment, “ were the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished !” How astonishing the downfall of the tyrant ! How complete the triumph of the daughter of Sion ! Such will be the destruction of the world ; such the salvation of the people of God.

“ 7. Thou, *even* thou, *art* to be feared ; and who may stand in thy sight, when once thou art angry ?”

Why are the miraculous exertions of omnipotence recorded in the book of life, but to suggest to us this reflection, that God, and God only, is the proper object of our fear ; since neither the wisdom of the wise, nor the power of the mighty, no, not the world itself, can stand a single moment before him, “ when once he is angry ?” Yet we continue to dread any

frowns but those of heaven ; and one poor, vain, sinful man shall, through a course of sixty or seventy years, incessantly and undauntedly tempt and provoke Him who destroyed 185,000 in a night. What is this, but madness ?

“ 8. Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven ; the earth feared, and was still ; 9. When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth, *or*, the afflicted of the land.”

A destruction so far exceeding human power, was evidently the sentence of God’s judgment, audibly pronounced from the eternal throne ; and it was heard by all the earth with an awful silence, as when he speaks to attentive nature in thunder. Such was the effect which this interposition in behalf of his people produced among the surviving Assyrians ; and the neighbouring nations. Let us carry our thoughts on to the sensations which will be felt in the hearts of men, at that hour when the last trump shall sound in the heavens, and the earth shall shake from her foundations ; when God shall arise to execute judgment on the adversaries of his church ; and to save, with an everlasting salvation, all the meek and afflicted of the earth.

“ 10. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee : the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”

The wrath of man, and of Satan himself, against the church ; turns, in the end, to the praise and glory of God, who represses it when at its height ; and at all times appoints those bounds which it cannot pass, any more than the raging waves of the ocean can overflow their appointed barrier of sand.

“ 11. Vow and pray unto the LORD your God; let all that are round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared. 12. He shall cut off, *or*, restrain, the spirit of princes; *he is* terrible to the kings of the earth.”

If such should have been the gratitude and devotion of Israelites, for a temporary deliverance from the fury of an earthly tyrant: how much higher ought that of Christians to rise, for eternal redemption from the great oppressor! How ought they to “vow and pay their vows unto the Lord their God; to bring presents,” to offer all they have, and all they are, to him who is so greatly “to be feared,” so highly to be loved; to him who “restrains” the fury of evil angels, as well as the “spirit of princes;” and is “terrible” to the powers of darkness, no less than to “the kings of the earth!”

PSALM LXXVII.

ARGUMENT.—As the foregoing Psalm was evidently composed, when the church had obtained deliverance from her enemies, this seems no less plainly to have been written at a time when she was in captivity under them. It contains, 1—4. a complaint of sufferings; and 5—20. a description at large of the struggle between distrust and faith; which latter prevails, by having recourse to the consideration of ancient mercies; particularly, that of redemption from Egypt. The Psalm is admirably calculated for the use and consolation of any church, or soul, when in affliction and distress.

“ 1. I cried unto God with my voice, *even* unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me.”

Uneasiness in the heart will utter itself by the “voice;” and when the pain is intense, the “cry” will be loud. Only let it take a right direction, and ascend to heaven; let the application be made to “God,” who will both “hear” and help; not to the world, which will not do one, and cannot do the other. The cries of the Son of God alone were heard for his own sake: the cries of all other men are heard for his sake.

“2. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my sore ran in the night, and ceased not; *Heb.* my hand was stretched out in the night, and ceased not, *or*, without intermission; my soul refused to be comforted.”

To a soul deeply sensible of the world’s vanity and the misery of sin, every day is a “day of trouble,” and the whole time of her pilgrimage is a long, dark, and wearisome “night,” during which she seeks after her beloved by prayer; and, for the sake of him, and those future joys which she expects in his presence, the pleasures of sense are put away from her, and she “refuses to be comforted” by such comforters. An Israelite cannot enjoy himself in Babylon; a Christian cannot find perfect satisfaction in the world: a return to Jerusalem will employ the thoughts of both.

“3. I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed: *or*, I remembered God, and made a noise, *i. e.* in prayer to him; I meditated, and my spirit was obscured, *or*, darkened, *through grief and affliction.*”

This is a fine description of what passes in an

afflicted and dejected mind. Between the remembrance of God and his former mercies, and the meditation on a seeming desertion under present calamities, the affections are variously agitated, and the prayers disturbed, like the tumultuous waves of a troubled sea ; while the fair light from above is intercepted, and the face of heaven overwhelmed with clouds and darkness.

“ 4. Thou holdest mine eyes waking : I am so troubled that I cannot speak.”

Through grief and anxiety it is, that the eyes are made to keep all the watches of the night, and wait in vain for sleep to relieve them from duty, until the dawning of the morning. To a night so spent, may a season of captivity or persecution be compared. Thus the ancient church looked for the first advent of Christ ; and thus doth the church which now is expect his second ; prolonging her vigils, even unto the dawning of that morning, which is at once to put a period to darkness and to sorrow. In the mean time, she giveth herself to meditation and prayer.

“ 5. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. 6. I call to remembrance my song in the night : I commune with mine own heart ; and my spirit maketh diligent search.”

Recollection of former mercies is the proper antidote against a temptation to despair, in the day of calamity. And as in the divine dispensations, which are always uniform and like themselves, whatever has happened happens again, when the circumstances are similar ; the experience of “ ancient times ” is to be

called in to our aid, and duly consulted. Nay, we may perhaps “remember” the time, when we ourselves were led to compose and utter a “song” of joy and triumph, on occasion of signal mercies vouchsafed us. Upon these topics we should, “in the night of affliction, commune with our own hearts, and make diligent search,” as did Daniel in Babylon, into the cause, the nature, and the probable continuance of our troubles; with the proper methods of shortening, and bringing them to an end, by suffering them to have their intended and full effect, in a sincere repentance, and thorough reformation.

“7. Will the LORD cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? 8. Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth *his* promise fail for evermore? 9. Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?”

The Psalmist now relates the process of his meditations, and of that controversy which arose in his heart between faith and distrust. While he viewed the distressful scene around him, he found himself strongly tempted to question God’s love of the church; to think that he had finally rejected his people; that the promised mercy of redemption would never be accomplished; and that indignation had constrained the bowels of our heavenly Father, which no longer yearned towards his afflicted children. These were the thoughts suggested to a desponding soul by the desolations of Sion at that time; and the state of things in the world may possibly be such, as to suggest the like thoughts to many in the Christian church, before our Lord shall appear again, for her

final redemption. Imaginations of the same cast will offer themselves to the mind of the sinner, when the hand of God has lain long and heavy upon him, by the infliction of outward calamities, or the terrors of conscience.

“ 10. And I said, *This is my infirmity : but I will remember* the years, *or*, changes, of the right hand of the Most High.”

To the insinuations of distrust, faith now begins to reply. The sufferer checks himself in his former train of thought, and humbly acknowledges it to have sprung from a mind dispirited, and rendered timid, by misfortunes : “ I said, *This is my infirmity ;*” but he immediately strengthens himself by reflecting, that all “ changes” in the conditions of men are effected, for reasons of infinite wisdom and goodness, by “ the right hand of the Most High ;” which is not shortened, but can still, as formerly, when he sees fit, deliver and exalt, as well as punish and depress, his people. What, therefore, though the daughter of Sion be in captivity, and her enemies insult over her ? Messiah cometh, who shall redeem her, and all nations ; and then shall “ the right hand of the Most High” work an universal and a glorious “ change” upon the earth.

“ 11. I will remember the works of the LORD : surely I will remember thy wonders of old. 12. I will meditate also of all thy works, and talk of thy doings.”

Thus restored to a right frame of mind, the Psalmist, instead of brooding any longer over the calamities of his own time, resolves to turn his thoughts

towards the divine dispensations of old ; to meditate on God's former works and wonders ; his works of justice and mercy, of power and wisdom, of nature and grace ; and, by gratefully celebrating them, to invigorate his faith in the salvation to come, of which they were so many earnest and pledges. And it is this consideration, which makes the eucharistic Psalms ever pleasing, and ever comfortable to the mind : they are appeals to those attributes which have been so often displayed in the cause of the church ; they are acts of faith, looking backward to the past, and forward to the future ; they are praises, and they are prayers.

“ 13. Thy way, O God, *is* in the sanctuary, *or*, in holiness ; who *is* so great a god as *our* God.”

Faith, now reinstated in its sovereignty over the prejudices and fears of the soul, and again placed upon the judgment-seat, pronounces the “ ways” or proceedings of God to be such, as, when weighed in the balance of the “ sanctuary,” and judged of by the divine rule and manner of acting, will be found agreeable to the standard of perfect “ holiness.” An assurance is likewise expressed, that the power of God, however it may, for a time, lie dormant, yet still retains the same superiority, of which former exertions show it to have been possessed, over the gods of the nations, the elements of nature, and the powers of the world ; insomuch that nothing, which was ever called by others, or called itself, “ god,” was able to stand before Jehovah, the God of Israel : “ Who is so great a god as our God ?” Thus, “ All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth,”

saith our blessed Lord, Matt. xxviii. 18. for the everlasting consolation of the Christian church.

“ 14. Thou *art* the God that doest wonders ; thou hast declared thy strength among the people. 15. Thou hast with *thine* arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph.”

Israel, in times of trouble and distress, was wont to look back to the “wonders” wrought in Egypt, and the redemption of all her tribes from that house of bondage. We Christians are taught, while we use the same words, to regard parallel, but more important, transactions ; we reflect on the “wonders” wrought for the bodies and souls of men, by the “strength and the arm” of Jehovah, revealed and manifested to the world in Christ ; and we celebrate the redemption, not of “the sons of Jacob and Joseph” only, but of all nations, from the bondage of corruption ; a redemption compared with which, the deliverance from Egypt, though glorious in itself, hath yet no glory at all, by reason of the glory that so far excelleth. Our confidence in God, during the seasons of affliction, should therefore rise in proportion.

“ 16. The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee ; they were afraid : the depths also were troubled.”

The waters of the Red Sea are here beautifully represented as endued with sensibility, as seeing, feeling, and being confounded, even to the lowest depths, at the presence and power of their great Creator, when he commanded them to open a way, and to form a wall on each side of it, until his people were passed over : until his people were passed over whom

he had redeemed. In this amazing transaction, let us behold, as in a glass the salvation of believers by baptism, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who made the depths of the grave, as he had done those of the sea, a way for his ransomed to pass over; and the church, like another Israel, saw her enemies, in effect, dead at her feet.

“17. The clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound; thine arrows also went abroad. 18. The voice of thy thunder *was* in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.”

It is said, Exod. xiv. 24. that at the time when Israel was passing the sea, “the Lord looked upon the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, and made them to go heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians.” The verses of our Psalm now before us, seem to explain more particularly the manner in which the Lord “looked upon, and troubled, and fought against, the Egyptians,” upon that occasion; namely, by thunders and lightnings, storms and tempests, rain, hail, and earthquake, the usual tokens and instruments of Almighty displeasure. Josephus, in like manner, relates, that the destruction of the Egyptians was accompanied by storms of rain from heaven; by dreadful thunders and lightnings; and, in short, by every possible circumstance of terror, which could testify and inflict upon man the vengeance of an incensed God. From

scenes like these, we learn to form an idea of that power which discomfited the infernal host; raised Christ from the dead; vanquished opposition and persecution; subdued the world to the obedience of faith; supports and protects the church; will overthrow antichrist; raise the dead; cast the wicked, with death and Satan, into the lake of fire; and exalt the righteous, to sing, with angels in heaven, "the song of Moses and of the Lamb." See Rev. xv. 3.

"19. Thy way *is* in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known."

The dispensations and ways of God, like the passage through the Red Sea, are all full of mercy to his people; but they are also, like that, often unusual, marvellous, inscrutable; and we can no more trace his footsteps, than we could have done those of Israel, after the waters had returned to their place again. Let us resolve, therefore, to trust in him at all times; and let us think we hear Moses saying to us, as he did to the Israelites, when seemingly reduced to the last extremity; "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah." Exod. xiv. 13.

"20. Thou leddest thy people, like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

The loving kindness of God towards Israel did not stop at the Red Sea, but he conducted his chosen flock, by the guidance of faithful pastors, through all the perils of the wilderness, to the land of promise. We likewise, through thy mercy, O blessed Lord Jesus, have passed the Red Sea at our baptism; and are now journeying in the wilder-

ness. Give us those meek, and lowly, and tractable dispositions, which become the sheep of thy pasture; set over us skilful and vigilant shepherds; and be thou ever both with them and with us; until, having surmounted all difficulties and dangers, led by thy grace, and supported by thy providence, we all come, in perfect safety, to the land of everlasting rest; there to live with thee, one fold under one shepherd, world without end.

PSALM LXXVIII.

Fifteenth Day.—Evening Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm containeth a declaration of God's dealings with his people, and of their behaviour to him, in Egypt, in the wilderness, and after their settlement in Canaan, to the days of David. It is written for the use and admonition of Christians; who may here view, as in a glass, the mercies they have received, and the returns which, alas! they have but too often made for them.

“ 1. GIVE ear, O my people, *to my law*: incline your ears to the words of my mouth.”

In this verse, the Psalmist opens his commission, and speaks as one having authority from above to instruct the world. He demands a large and attentive audience, while by a series of examples he sets forth the goodness of God, and the ingratitude of man, for the admonition of succeeding ages, to the end of time. St. Paul, speaking of the very transactions related in our Psalm, saith of them, “ Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, Gr. *τυποι*, types; and they are written for

our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”—1 Cor. x. 11. We Christians, therefore, must consider ourselves as the “people” who are to “give ear to the law,” or “doctrine,” inculcated by the following epitome of the Israelitish history; we must “incline our ears to the words of” the prophet’s “mouth.”

“2. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old. 3. Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.”

The Psalm, being in itself a plain narrative of facts, can contain nothing parabolical or enigmatical in it, unless those facts were, what St. Paul affirms them to have been, “ensamples,” types, or representations of other facts relative to the Christian church. As facts, they were “heard, and known,” and handed down from father to son; but with respect to the instructions and admonitions comprehended in them, and to be extracted by an application to parallel times and circumstances, they had the nature of a “parable,” requiring wisdom and attention, so to understand and apply them. It is observable, that our Lord is, by St. Matthew, said to have spoken to the multitude altogether in parables, “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables,” &c. citing the 2d verse of the Psalm now before us.—Matt. xiii. 35. If it doth not follow, from this citation, that the prophet actually speaks the Psalm in the person of Christ, yet thus much at least is evident from it, that the history of old Israel somewhat resembles the latter of the Gos-

pel parables, and contains, shadowed out under it, the history of a corresponding state of things in the new Israel, or church Christian.* And although the Psalm, like a large and capacious palace, be laid out into a multitude of different apartments, yet, perhaps, we may find, that the Scriptures of the New Testament will furnish us with a key which will gain us admission into every one of them, and put us in possession of the treasures of divine wisdom therein deposited.

“ 4. We will not hide *them* from their children, showing to the generation to come, *Heb.* the latter generation, the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.”

The writer of this Psalm is desirous that “ the praises of Jehovah, his strength, and the wonderful works that he hath done,” an account of which had reached his own time, should be transmitted, through all the periods of the Jewish economy, down to the דור אחרון, the “ latter generation,” or generation to arise in the “ latter days;” the generation of the faithful, to be begotten unto God, from among the Gentiles, through the Gospel. Of this generation are we, who now in these words of the holy Psalmist do from age to age “ show the praises of the Lord,” our Saviour, “ and his strength, and his wondrous works that he hath done” for us, as he promised and foreshowed, in his dispensations of old time. The

* “ In parabolis”—Aliud dicit; aliud innuit: ac præteritorum specie futura præagit. Id quoque ex persona Christi. Matt. xiii. 35. BOSSUET.

glorious theme was delivered by the Israelitish to the Christian church, and will be resumed in heaven, there for ever to employ the tongues of saints, and the harps of angels.

“ 5. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: 6. That the generation to come, *or*, latter generation, might know *them*, *even* the children *which* should be born: *who* should arise and declare *them* to their children;”

The account of God’s dealings with his people, to be celebrated in our Psalm, begins with the “law,” or “testimony, appointed and established in Israel,” by the hand of Moses. Under these names are comprehended, not only the precepts and ceremonies, but the several transactions to which they referred, and in commemoration of which they were instituted; as also that future salvation, to which they, as well as the transactions, had an aspect. Thus the pass-over, for instance, looked backward to the redemption by Moses, and forward to that by Messiah. The law thus considered, as involving the Gospel within it, was, to understanding and pious Israelites, the fountain of wisdom, and source of delight. They were to meditate therein day and night, and teach their children to do likewise; until, with its types realized, and its prophecies accomplished in the Redeemer, it should go forth out of Sion in perfect beauty, and run and be glorified among the nations. The “law” and the “testimony” are now become ours; and it is our duty to transmit

them down to the latest posterity, until Jesus shall return to judgment.

“ 7. That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; 8. And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation *that* set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.”

The reason is here assigned, why God gave Israel a law, and commanded that fathers should teach it to their children, and their children's children; and the same reason holds with regard to the Gospel; namely, that the chosen people, renouncing the world, with its idols and lusts, should believe and “ set their hope in” the true “ God,” the only Saviour, that they should “ not forget the works” which he hath wrought for their redemption; and that, ever mindful of those works, they should love him, and “ keep his commandments;” not following the examples of the fathers of Israel, who proved “ faithless and rebellious” in the wilderness, when God had brought them out of Egypt. This is the very use St. Paul makes of those examples. “ With some of them,” says he, “ God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples,” *τυποὶ ἡμῶν*, “ to the intent we should not lust after evil things, or be idolaters, or commit fornication, &c. as did some of them.” 1 Cor. x. 5.

“ 9. The children of Ephraim, *being* armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.”

As the context treats concerning the behaviour of Israel in general, upon their coming out of Egypt; and as the cowardice of the tribe of Ephraim in particular, at that time, is no where mentioned; it is therefore most probable, that one tribe is here put for all the rest; and that under the figure of men, when prepared for battle, turning their backs at sight of an enemy, is pointed out that disposition of the Israelites, after all their promises, resolutions, and vows of serving and obeying God, to fall away, and relapse into sin, upon the first temptation. How often is this the case with the Christian soldier? Let not him who hath but just put on his spiritual armour, boast, like him who is putting it off when the fight is over, and the victory obtained.

“ 10. They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law. 11. And forgot his works, and his wonders that he had showed them. 12. Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt, *in* the field of Zoan.”

These verses, it is apprehended, describe in plain terms, what was metaphorically expressed in the verse preceding, namely, the proneness of the Israelites to break the “covenant,” transgress the “law,” and forget the “works” of God, even those astonishing works wrought in “Egypt,” and in “Zoan,” its capital city. Let the Christian, who perhaps is amazed at the frequent rebellions of stiff-necked Israel, reflect a little within himself, how he has observed the baptismal “covenant;” how he has “walked in the law,” and with what gratitude he has remembered the “marvellous works” of Jesus.

“ 13. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through, and he made the waters to stand as an heap.”

From the miracles wrought in Egypt, the Psalmist proceeds to what happened at the Exodus. And here, he fails not to mention that great work of Almighty power, the division of the Red Sea, which was ever uppermost in the thoughts of a devout Israelite; as the passage of the church, in Christ her Saviour, through the grave and gate of death, ought never to depart from the memory of a Christian.

“ 14. In the day-time also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire.”

During the forty years' pilgrimage of Israel in the wilderness, a preternatural column of fire and cloud attended the camp. It rested with them, and moved on before them, directing and conducting them in their journeys; in the night-season it was a bright and shining light; and in the day-time it afforded a grateful, cooling shade from the burning heat of those sultry deserts. This is Christ present with his church, while she sojourns upon earth, by his Word and his Spirit, guiding her steps, enlightening her darkness, and mitigating her sorrows.

“ 15. He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave *them* drink as *out of* the great depths. 16. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.”

Let us, saith Bishop Taylor, by the aids of memory and fancy, consider the children of Israel in

the wilderness, in a barren and dry land where no water was, marching in dust and fire, not wet with the dew of heaven, but wholly without moisture, save only what dropped from their own brows. The air was fire, and the vermin was fire; the flying serpents were of the same kindred with the firmament; their sting was a flame, their venom was a fever, and the fever a calenture; and the whole state of the Israelites' abode and travel, was a little image of the day of judgment, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat. These men, like salamanders, walking in fire, dry with heat, scorched with thirst, and made yet more thirsty by calling upon God for water; suppose, I say, these thirsty souls hearing Moses promise that he will smite the rock, and that a river should break forth from thence; observe how presently they run to the foot of the springing stone, thirsting forth their heads and tongues to meet the water, impatient of delay, crying out that the water did not move, like light, all at once: and then suppose the pleasure of their drink, the insatiableness of their desire, the immensity of their appetite: they took in as much as they could, and they desired much more. This was their Sacrament, and this was their manner of receiving it. And if that water was a type of our Sacrament, or a Sacrament of the same secret blessing, then is their thirst a signification of our duty.*

“17. And they sinned yet more against him, by provoking the Most High in the wilderness.

18. And they tempted God in their hearts, by asking meat for their lust. 19. Yea, they spake against God: they said, can God furnish a table in the wilderness? 20. Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also, or provide flesh for his people?"

These frequent rebellions of Israel with the presence of God in the midst of them, and his miracles before their eyes, would seem incredible, had they been related any where but in the oracles of truth; and did not the heart of every self-knowing Christian at once acknowledge the picture which is here drawn of human nature, its incredulity and perverseness. For hath not God delivered us from the house of bondage, and supported us in the wilderness: is not Jesus present in the church, and are not his miracles of love and mercy continually before our eyes, in the Word and in the Sacrament? Yet, who does not still "provoke" and "tempt the most High;" who does not ask provision for his "lust," when his necessities are satisfied: and who, after all the proofs he has had of God's power and goodness, is not apt, upon every appearance of danger, to be diffident, and distrustful of his providence? Before we condemn others, let us try ourselves, and judge righteous judgment. When David pronounced the words, "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die," little did he think of being told by his faithful monitor, "Thou art the man." Conscience, if duly interrogated, will be a Nathan to every one, and show him his own transgressions, in those of old Israel.

“ 21. Therefore the Lord heard *this*, and was wroth, so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; 22. Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation. 23. Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven. 24. And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. 25. Man did eat angels’ food: he sent them meat to the full.”

The discontents, mentioned above, in verse 17, &c. were posterior not only to the miracle at the rock, but also to the gift of “manna,” which, after some little time, the people “loathed,” and demanded “flesh,” repenting that they had forsaken Egypt, where they fared more to their satisfaction. See Numb. xi. The cause of the discontents was infidelity, and the effect of them a display of God’s indignation; “The Lord was wroth—because they believed not,” &c. Now, as St. Paul styles the water, “spiritual,” or, “sacramental drink,” proceeding from a “spiritual rock, which rock was Christ;” so he terms the manna, “spiritual,” or “sacramental meat; they did all eat of the same spiritual meat.” 1 Cor. x. 3. And our Lord, in John vi. discourses at large upon the subject, to convince the Jews, that God, who gave to their fathers manna in the wilderness, had in HIM given them “true bread” of eternal life, which the manna was intended to represent. “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, which I will give for the life

of the world." Christ crucified is the support of spiritual and eternal life; faith is the mouth by which this support is received; manna was an outward and visible sign of it to the Israelites in the wilderness; the eucharistic bread is such to Christians in the world. When that holy ordinance is celebrated, "the doors of heaven are opened," spiritual food is given from above, and man eats אֲבִירִים לֶחֶם, the bread of the "mighty ones;" whether by "mighty ones" we understand those who eat the bread, and are invigorated thereby; or the blessed persons who give the bread to man. Such is our manna, our sustenance in the wilderness, our viaticum, while on the road to Canaan. But how is it "loathed," and despised, in comparison with "the flesh pots of Egypt," by men who "believe not in God, and trust not in his salvation!" Will not the same cause produce the same effect? Will not Jehovah hear this, and be wroth? Will not "a fire be kindled against Jacob, and anger also come up against Israel!" "For this cause," saith an apostle to the irreverent Corinthian receivers, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." 1 Cor. xi. 30.

" 26. He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven; and by his power he brought in the south wind. 27. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea. 28. And he let *it* fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. 29. So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire. 30. They were not estranged from their lust: but while the meat was yet in their mouths, 31. The

wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen *men* of Israel."

The people, discontented with manna, asked in a tumultuous and rebellious way, for flesh, at the same time distrusting the power of God to give it them in the wilderness. Flesh, however, was procured. A wind, proper for the occasion, went forth from Jehovah, and brought a cloud of quails, which furnished the whole camp with a most delicious kind of flesh food, for the space of an entire month. But from the event we learn, that inordinate desires, though sometimes complied with, and satisfied by heaven, do not therefore go unpunished; on the contrary, they are often punished by being complied with. The blessings chosen for us by God, are blessings indeed, and, like the manna, bring no sorrow with them: but when we choose for ourselves, and are so unhappy as to be gratified in that choice, our portion too often proves a curse; and while the much-loved morsel is yet between our teeth, "the wrath of God comes upon us," for making a wrong choice. This will always be the case in the end, whenever earth is preferred to heaven, and sense to faith.

" 32. For all this they sinned still: and believed not for his wondrous works. 33. Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble."

Mercies are followed by provocations; provocations are punished with judgments; to judgments succeed repeated provocations, which call down fresh

judgments. Immediately after the history of the quails, we read of a sedition stirred up by Aaron and Miriam, and of new murmurs at the report brought by the spies, concerning the promised land; in consequence of which last, the nation had been destroyed, but for the intercession of Moses; and the whole generation of those who came out of Egypt, except Joshua and Caleb, actually fell in the wilderness, wasted and consumed by various plagues and calamities, during a forty years' peregrination.—See Numb. xii, xiii, xiv. St. Jude makes mention of such a generation in the early days of the Christian church, speakers of “hard speeches against Christ, murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and he therefore puts converts “in remembrance, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.” Jude verse 5, and 15. Because, notwithstanding all that Jesus has done, and continues to do for the church, men “sin yet more, and believe not for his wondrous works,” but either despise the heavenly country, or despair of obtaining it, therefore is the hand of God heavy upon the world; “vanity and trouble” wear out the life of man; and they who have passed the waters of baptism, fall short of the promised rest.

“34. When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned, and inquired early after God. 35. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the High God their Redeemer. 36. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.

37. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant."

Several instances of this behaviour occur in the history of Korah's rebellion and punishment, of the fiery serpents, and of Israel and Moab.—See Numb. xvi, xx, xxi, xxv. The Israelites, in this particular, resembled their great persecutor Pharaoh; their repentance, which came with the divine judgments, went also away with them, and appeared no more. By night the dew falleth from heaven, and refresheth the weary ground, and causeth the green herb and the flower of the field to revive and spring; but in the morning, the sun ariseth with a burning heat, and presently the dew is evaporated, the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, and the ground again becometh parched and dry as before. Thus it is with man. Adversity is the night, and grace is the dew, by which his heart is made tender and religious, and good resolutions are formed, and begin to shoot: but returning prosperity has the force and effect of a summer sun; at its presence piety vanisheth, resolutions come to nothing, and the heart is once more hardened. "O Ephraim," exclaims Jehovah by his prophet, "what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it passes away:" Hos. vi. 4. Who, that hath been conversant in the house of mourning, and about the bed of sickness, but must have seen frequent instances of a temporary and deceitful repentance? Whose heart doth not reproach him with some of these backslidings of Israel? In the day, therefore, of health and strength

and prosperity, before the indignation of heaven break forth, and the right aiming thunderbolts fly abroad, from a motive of love, not of fear, let us “seek early after God, and return from our sins, remembering the rock of our salvation, and the high God our Redeemer.” Thus may we entertain some hope, that our conversion is sincere; that we do not “flatter, and lie” unto our Maker; that our “heart is right with him,” and we shall continue “steadfast in his covenant.” And then, a plant that is set and lives in the heat of the day, how will it thrive, and flourish, under the cool and moist influences of night?

“38. But he *being* full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed *them* not; yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. 39. For he remembereth that they *were but* flesh: a wind, *or*, breath, that passeth away, and cometh not again.”

Had God “stirred up all his wrath,” the Israelites must have been exterminated in the wilderness. But then, the promises made to Abraham, of mercy and “compassion” to them, and by them to all mankind, had failed. Therefore they were “forgiven,” and not “destroyed:” judgment was executed, from time to time, upon the person of offenders; but still a remnant was left; the nation subsisted, until the Seed came to whom the promise was made. Nay, although, in consequence of their last and greatest crime, their polity was subverted with their city and temple, the race is yet marvellously preserved; and, we trust, preserved for mercy to be shown them

in the last days. Be not angry, O Lord Jesus, for ever, with them, or with us, but remember of what materials we are made, and into what a state we are fallen; how weak and how frail we are; how liable to be seduced into sin, and blinded by error: remember this, O Lord, and forgive us; and teach us to remember it, that we may forgive one another.

“ 40. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, *and* grieve him in the desert? 41. Yea, they turned back, and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. 42. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the hand of the enemy: 43. How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan.”

The question which the Psalmist here asks, concerning Israel in the wilderness, is elsewhere asked by him, concerning mankind in general: “ Who can tell how oft he offendeth?” Psal. xix. 12. God informs Moses, who had interceded for the people, and, in the name of the great Mediator obtained their pardon, that “ those men which had seen his glory, and his miracles which he did in Egypt and in the wilderness, had tempted him ten times, and had not hearkened to his voice.” Numb. xiv. 22. Forgetfulness of the mercies of redemption is the beginning of sin; and though every one knows how to resent and detest the crime of ingratitude in another, he yet thinks that his best benefactor will overlook the most flagrant instances of it in himself.

“ 44. And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink. 45. He sent divers sorts of flies, *Heb.* a mixture, *whether of beasts, or insects, noisome and destructive*, among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. 46. He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust. 47. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost. 48. He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts, *or, flashes of lightning.*”

The Psalm goes back to the subject of Israelitish ingratitude, mentioned at the beginning, verse 11, 12. in order to introduce an account of the miracles wrought in Egypt, previous to the exodus. These miracles were intended to evince the superiority of Jehovah over the elements and powers of nature, which at that time were objects of worship amongst the Egyptians, but plainly appeared to act at the command of Moses, in subordination to their great Creator, the God of the Hebrews. In the heavens, on the earth, and in the waters, supremacy and independency were demonstrated to belong to him only: fire and air, thunder and lightning, wind, rain, and hail obeyed his word: rivers became blood, and their inhabitants perished; insects and animals left their wonted habitations, to destroy vegetables, or torment man: so that wherever the gods of Egypt were supposed to reside, and to exert their influences in favour of their votaries, in all places, and all circumstances, victory declared for Jehovah. Hence modern as well as ancient

idolaters may learn not to put their trust in the world, but in him who made, and who can and will destroy it; whose power can render the most insignificant of his creatures, instruments of his vengeance, and in a moment, arm all the elements against sinners; and whose mercy will employ that power in the final salvation of the church; when, as the author of the book of Wisdom expresseth it, “He shall make the creature his weapon for the revenge of his enemies, and the world shall fight for him against the unwise.”—Wisd. v. 17, 20. The curious and striking reflections which that author makes on the plagues of Egypt, in chap. xi, xvii, xviii, xix. are well worthy of an attentive perusal. It is also to be observed, that St. John describes the judgments of the last days in terms plainly alluding to those poured out upon the Egyptians, as “locusts and frogs; blood and darkness,” &c. See Rev. ix. and xvi. et al. Under these images are represented false teachers and erroneous doctrines, carnality and ignorance, and, in a word, whatever contributes to ravage the moral or spiritual world, to deface the beauty of holiness, and destroy the fruits of faith. And of all the divine judgments, these are by far the most dreadful, though generally the least dreaded.

“49. He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels *among them*.”

Some of the Egyptian plagues having been specified in the foregoing verses, others of them are here thrown together, and the whole scene is affirmed

to have been a full display of wrath and vengeance executed upon the oppressors of the church by רעים מלאכים, “evil angels, agents or messengers;” whether by this expression we understand the material instruments of divine displeasure; or angels employed as ministers of vengeance; or the actual appearance and ministration of evil spirits, suffered to torment the wicked in this world, as they certainly will do in the next. Tradition seems to have favoured this last opinion, since the author of the book of Wisdom, above referred to, describes the Egyptian darkness as a kind of temporary hell, in which there appeared to the wicked, whose consciences suggested to them every thing that was horrible, “a fire kindled of itself, very dreadful; they were scared with beasts that passed by, and hissing of serpents; and they were vexed with monstrous apparitions, so that they fainted, and died for fear; while over them was spread a heavy night, and image of that darkness which should afterwards receive them.” Wisd. xvii.

“50. He made a way to his anger, he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; 51. And smote all the first-born in Egypt; the chief of *their* strength in the tabernacles of Ham:”

The last plague was the death of the first-born, both of man and beast; Exod. xii. 29. when God, having removed every obstacle that mercy had thrown in the path of justice, “made a way to his indignation,” which then rushed forth like a fiery stream. An unlimited commission was given to the destroyer, who at midnight passed through the

land, and gave the fatal stroke in every house.—“ While all things, O Lord, were in quiet silence, and that night was in the midst of her swift course, thine Almighty Word leapt down from heaven out of thy royal throne, as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction, and brought thine unfeigned commandment as a sharp sword, and standing up, filled all things with death: and it touched the heaven, but it stood upon the earth:” Wisd. xviii. 14. Pharaoh and all his servants rose up in the night; there was a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt; and universal consternation reigned, inferior only to that which is to extend its empire over the world, when the “ trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised.” May we be saved, like Israel, in that hour, through the blood of the true paschal Lamb, slain to take away the sins of the world. “ When I see the blood,” says Jehovah to his people, “ I will pass over you.”

“ 52. But made his own people to go forth like sheep: and guided them in the wilderness, like a flock; 53. And he led them on safely, so that they feared not; but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. 54. And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, *even to this mountain, which* his right hand had purchased. 55. He cast out the heathen also before them; and divided them an inheritance by line: and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.”

Having related the punishments inflicted on Egypt, the Psalmist returns to those mercies experienced by the Israelites, when God overthrew their

enemies, took them under his protection, fed and conducted them in the wilderness, brought them to the promised land, expelled the heathen, settled his people, and at length fixed his residence on mount Sion, which is represented as the conquest and acquisition of his own arm; since the victories of Joshua, &c. were all owing to the divine presence and assistance. The Christian church, after her redemption by “the blood of the Lamb, passed 300 years in a state of minority, as it were, and under persecution, which, with allusion to what befel Israel of old, is called in the Revelation, her flight and abode in the WILDERNESS: Rev. xii. 6. At length the true “Joshua,” or JESUS, “brought” her “into the possession of the Gentiles;” see Acts vii. 45. and she enjoyed a temporary rest and prosperity. But no terrestrial Canaan, no secular advantages, should make us forget, as the Jews did, and as Christians are apt to do, that the church is in the wilderness, while she is in the world; and that “there remaineth yet” another and far more glorious “rest for the people of God,” after which they ought ever to be aspiring. See Heb. iv. 9.

“56. Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies: 57. But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. 58. For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images.”

The Israelites, when settled in the promised land, soon showed themselves to be the genuine descendants

of those men, who tempted God in the desert. We can hardly read two chapters in the book of Judges, but we meet with the words, “ And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord.” For this their frequent revolting, they are compared to “ a deceitful bow,” which, when put to the trial, is sure to disappoint the archer, either dropping the arrow at his feet, or carrying it wide of the mark. Their zeal and love were either wholly relaxed and enervated by sensuality and indolence, or else turned aside, and misplaced on false objects of worship. Thus, in the present decline of religion, the devotion of the Romanists hath attached itself to saints, angels and images; while that of Protestants sleepeth, and must be awakened. In what manner is known to God only.

“ 59. When God heard *this*, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: 60. So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent *which* he placed among men: 61. And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies’ hand.

Rebellion against God will, sooner or later, draw down his vengeance, and cause the most beloved nation to be “ abhorred” by him: he will forsake the place of his residence, “ the tent placed among men,” where he dwelleth by his Spirit; and the church, by which his “ strength,” and his “ glory” are manifested to the world, shall go “ into captivity, and the enemies’ hand.” All this we are taught by that which came to pass in Israel, when, for the sins of priests and people, the ark of God, which then abode in Shiloh, was suffered to fall into the hands

of the Philistines: 1 Sam. iv. The present state of Jerusalem, and of all the once flourishing Eastern and African churches, speaks aloud the same awful and concerning truth. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

“62. He gave his people over also unto the sword: and was wroth with his inheritance. 63. The fire consumed their young men: and their maidens were not given to marriage. 64. Their priests fell by the sword: and their widows made no lamentation.”

These verses refer to the slaughter of Israel by the Philistines, which was an effect of divine wrath, compared here, as elsewhere, to “a consuming fire;” they refer likewise to the death of old Eli, of Hophni and Phinehas, and the widow of Phinehas, who expired in childbed, on hearing the mournful news: 1 Sam. iv. History abounds with the tragical stories of wars and captivities: Scripture informs us, they are the judgments of God against sin: but calamities affect us not, till they become our own: it is well if they reform us, even when they do become so.

“65. Then the LORD awaked, as one out of sleep, *and* like a mighty man, that shouteth, by reason of wine.”

While, by God’s permission, the Philistines were chastising his people for their sins, he held his peace, and seemed unconcerned as one asleep. But when due chastisement had brought the delinquents to themselves, the cries of penitent Israel awakened,

as it were, and called forth the zeal of the Lord of hosts, to vindicate his honour, and to deliver his servants: and then, the vigour of his operations was such, as might be compared to the alacrity and courage of a mighty champion, when, refreshed and inspirited by wine, he attacks his adversaries, and bears down all before him. Under all our sufferings, let us rest contented with this assurance, that God acts the part of a father; and will therefore remove the rod, when it has answered the end proposed.

“66. And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts; he put them to a perpetual reproach.”

The former clause of this verse may be rendered, “And he repulsed, or drove his enemies back;” as Psalm ix. 3. “When mine enemies are turned back;” the Hebrew word being the same, in both places. But as that part of the sacred history is here alluded to, in which the Philistines are said to have been plagued with “emerods,” or “hemorrhoids,” while the ark was amongst them, the passage is generally rendered, as in our translation, and supposed to intend that particular plague. This much, however, is certain, that Dagon fell before the ark, which his worshippers were glad to send back, with acknowledgments of the vengeance inflicted on them by the superior power of the God of Israel, who could punish where, and when, and how he pleased. See 1 Sam. v. vi.

“67. Moreover, he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; 68.

But chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Sion which he loved. 69. And he built his sanctuary like high *palaces*, like the earth which he hath established for ever."

The ark, after its return, went no more to Shiloh, which was in the tribe of Ephraim, the son of Joseph, but was brought first to Kiriathaim, 1 Sam. vi. 21. a city of the tribe of Judah, and from thence, after a short stay at the house of Obed Edom, to Mount Sion, 1 Chron. xiv. and xv. which was the chosen and highly-favoured mount: where was afterwards erected, by Solomon, a magnificent and permanent habitation for the God of Jacob, during the continuance of the old dispensation; a resemblance of that eternal temple, in which all the fulness of the Godhead hath since dwelt bodily. The divine presence removed at this time to the tribe of Judah, because out of that tribe, after the rejection of Saul, came the great representative, as well as progenitor, of King Messiah.

"70. He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds. 71. From following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. 72. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skill of his hands."

The call of David, from his sheepfold to a throne teacheth us, that he loved himself faithful in his service, as worthy of promotion to the important cares; that the due discharge of high

offices, are best learned at first in an inferior station, especially if it be one that will inure to labour and vigilance; and that kings are to consider themselves as “shepherds;” which consideration would perhaps teach them their duty better than all the precepts in the world. From the last verse, relative to David’s manner of conducting himself after his advancement, we learn, that integrity and discretion, when they meet in the same person, form a complete Ruler, and one fit to represent that blessed person, who entered, like his father David, through sufferings into his glory; who governeth his church in wisdom and righteousness; and of whom it is said, by the evangelical prophet, “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” Isa. xl. 11.

PSALM LXXIX.

Sixteenth Day.—Morning Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—The argument of this Psalm is nearly the same with that of the lxxivth. The church, persecuted and afflicted, sets forth, 1—3. the sacrilegious devastation, and cruel slaughter, made by the enemy, with, 4. the reproach occasioned thereby; 5—7. she prayeth for redress and deliverance; 8, 9. confesseth, and entreateth forgiveness of the sins, which had brought these calamities upon her; and then, 10—12. asketh a removal of her reproach and misery; promising, 13. endless gratitude and praise for the same. We meet with passages of this Psalm, Jer. x. 25. 1 Macc. vii. 17. but when it was composed, is not known.

“1. O GOD, the heathen are come into thine inheritance, thy holy temple have they defiled: they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.”

Three deplorable calamities are here enumerated by the faithful; the alienation of God's inheritance, the profanation of the sanctuary, and the desolation of the beloved city. When we represent, in our prayers, the sufferings and humiliation of the church, we take an effectual method of awakening the compassion, and recalling the favour of heaven. Every redeemed soul is the inheritance, the temple, the city of God. When sin enters, and takes possession, the inheritance is alienated, the temple defiled, and the city desolated.

“ 2. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given *to be* meat unto the fowls of heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. 3. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem: and *there was* none to bury *them*.”

That horrible carnage, which attends the siege and capture of a city, is the fourth of those calamities, bewailed in our Psalm. To behold, or even to imagine, heaps of slaughtered bodies lying unburied, and exposed to birds and beasts of prey, is inexpressibly shocking to humanity. But with what unconcern are we accustomed to view, on all sides of us, multitudes “dead in trespasses and sins,” torn in pieces, and devoured by wild passions, filthy lusts, and infernal spirits, those dogs and vultures of the moral world? Yet to a discerning eye, and a thinking mind, the latter is by far the more melancholy sight of the two.

“ 4. We are become a reproach to our neighbours: a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.”

A fifth calamity, incident to an afflicted church, is to become, like captive Israel, the "scorn and derision" of infidels, who fail not, at such seasons, to reproach her, and blaspheme her God. We know how to answer those, who reproach us with our sufferings, for so their predecessors reproached our Master; but what shall we say, if we have given the enemy occasion to reproach us with our sins? The only real disgrace of religion is the wickedness of its professors.

"5. How long, LORD? Wilt thou be angry for ever? Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?"

Parched, and exhausted, amidst the flames of persecution, we behold Sion panting for the comforts of redemption. The extent and continuance of her troubles cause her to fear a total extermination; and by the questions here asked, she tacitly reminds God of his promises not to give her up, and destroy her "for ever," on account of Messias, whom she was, in the fulness of time, to bring forth.

"6. Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. 7. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling-place."

This, though uttered in the form of a wish, or prayer, is to be considered, like many other passages of the same nature, as a prediction of what would afterwards come to pass. Pagan ambition and cruelty were often employed to chastise offending Israel; but were themselves, notwithstanding, justly punished in their turn, by other powers raised up

for that end. That relation in which the church stands to God, causes him, upon her repentance, to appear in her behalf, and to execute vengeance on her oppressors, who “know him not, nor call upon his name.” “We are thine,” saith Isaiah, “thou never bearest rule over them, they were not called by thy name:” lxiii. 19. The church, for her sins, may deserve to suffer; but her enemies are not therefore without guilt, nor will they escape without punishment.

“8. O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low. 9. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name’s sake.”

Affliction hath then wrought its intended effect, when it hath convinced us of sin, and led us to repentance; when brought back by it, like the returning prodigal, to the house and presence of our heavenly Father, we acknowledge our guilt as the cause of our misery, and entreat forgiveness of the one, in order to obtain a release from the other; not pleading our own merits, but the mercies of God our Saviour, and the glory of his name.

“10. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight, *by* the revenging of the blood of thy servants *which* is shed; *or*, let the vengeance of thy servants’ blood that is shed, be known among the heathen that is in our sight.”

It is for “the glory of God’s name” to deliver

his church ; because, while she is in trouble, that name is blasphemed by the enemy, as if he wanted either power or will, to prevent or remove the calamities of his servants. Prayer is therefore here made by the faithful, that God, not to gratify any vindictive spirit of theirs, but to vindicate his own attributes, would break the teeth of the oppressor, and work a public and glorious salvation for his chosen; at beholding which, the very adversaries themselves might possibly be converted.

“ 11. Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee : according to the greatness of thy power, preserve thou those that are appointed to die.”

Next to those who had been slain, the case of such as groaned in captivity, lying bound in chains and fetters, under sentence of death, to be inflicted at the will of their cruel and insulting conquerors, is recommended to God. The Christian, though he may at present be subject to none of these external calamities, forgets not that he is often persecuted, and led captive by his own desires, and bound in the chains of his sins; that the world to him is a prison; that sentence of death is passed upon him, and he knoweth not how soon that sentence may be executed. How properly, therefore, and how fervently may he, at all times pray, “ O let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power, preserve thou those that are appointed to die.”

“ 12. And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O LORD.”

That is, As they have reproached thee with weakness, so manifest to others their weakness, who are but sinful dust and ashes; as they have endeavoured to make thee contemptible, so let the world have just cause to despise them, who have thus presumptuously offended; according as it written, "Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed." 1 Sam. ii. 30. And, however different the appearance of things may now be, this will certainly be found true, in every instance, at the last day.

"13. So we thy people, and sheep of thy pasture, will give thee thanks for ever: we will show forth thy praise to all generations."

Such is the resolution of a church, under persecution; and such ought to be the practice of every church when delivered out of it, and restored to the favour and protection of her God. The same is the duty of every soul, with regard to afflictions and mercies of a private kind. But how glorious will be the day, when triumphant over sin and sorrow, over every thing that exalteth and opposeth itself, the church universal shall behold the adversary disarmed for ever; while she herself, placed in pastures of joy, and led to the waters of eternal comfort, shall, from age to age, incessantly sing the praises of her great Shepherd and Bishop, her King and her God!

PSALM LXXX.

ARGUMENT.—The church, still in captivity, 1—3. crieth unto God for help and redemption; 4—7. complaineth of her grievous afflictions; 8—13. describeth her former exaltation, and present depression, under the beautiful figure of a Vine; 14—16. returneth again to her supplications, and 17—19. prayeth for the advent of Messiah, to quicken and comfort her, vowing all loyal obedience, adoration, and praise to him, as the author of her salvation.

“ 1. GIVE ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.”

The Christian church is now become the “Israel” of God: Jesus Christ is the “Shepherd” of this Israel, who leadeth his people “like a flock;” he dwelleth in the midst of them by his Spirit, as of old he dwelt in the holy places, “between the cherubims.” Let us beseech him to hearken to our prayers, and to manifest the glory of his power, in our defence and deliverance.

“ 2. Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up thy strength, and come *and* save us.”

God is entreated to go forth, in his strength and his salvation, before the tribes of Israel, as formerly in the wilderness. Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, are particularly mentioned, perhaps because, according to the established order, those three tribes immediately followed the ark and cherubim, the symbols of the divine presence. See Num. ii. 18.

“3. Turn, *or*, restore us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”

This verse is a kind of chorus, occurring three times in the course of our Psalm. It implies, that the church is in captivity, from which she prayeth to be “restored” to her former freedom and prosperity: that she expecteth such restoration, not from any might or merit of her own, but from the grace and mercy of her Saviour; as well knowing, that her night can be turned into day, and her winter give place to spring, only by the sun of righteousness rising, and causing his face to shine upon her desolations. This ought, therefore, to be the wish and the prayer of every persecuted church, and of every afflicted soul.

“4. O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?”

The sins of a people may for a time “separate between them and their God, and hide his face from them that he will not hear;” Isaiah lix. 2. he may “cover himself with a cloud, that their prayers should not pass through;” Lam. iii. 44. and seem to reject even the devotions of his distressed servants, while he is proving the strength of their faith, and the sincerity of their repentance. But if the former be strong, and the latter sincere, they will continue to ask, till they have obtained; nor cease to knock, till the door be opened.

“5. Thou feedest them with the bread of tears, *or*, of weeping; and givest them tears to drink in great measure.”

There cannot be a more striking picture of Sion in captivity! Her bread is dipped in tears, and her cup is filled to the brim with them: no time is free from grief and lamentation. They who sin, must submit to penance; which if a man doth not impose on himself, God will impose it on him: whereas, if we judged ourselves, we should not be thus judged of the Lord. The church hath appointed seasons, and given directions for this purpose; but who observes either the one, or the other?

“ 6. Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours; and our enemies laugh among themselves.”

Israel, when forsaken by her God, was a prey, for which all the neighbouring nations contended, exulting over her, and scoffing at that condition, to which, not their counsels, or armies, but her own iniquities, had reduced her. Hence let us learn, how to form a just estimate of the real state both of communities and individuals. Righteousness alone exalteth man; sin is his reproach, and will be his destruction.

“ 7. Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved. *See above, ver. 3.* 8. Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.”

God is reminded of the favour once shown by him to the church of Israel, and of that prosperity which she once enjoyed. She is compared to a “vine,” removed, from the unkindly soil of Egypt, to the happier regions of Canaan, and there plant-

ed by Jehovah, in the place of nations extirpated for their unfruitfulness. The vine is a plant weak and lowly, and needing support; when supported, wild and luxuriant, unless restrained by the pruning-knife; capable of producing the most valuable fruit; but, if barren, the most unprofitable among trees, and fit only for the flames. In all these respects it is a lively emblem of the church, and used as such by Isaiah v. 7. by Ezekiel xv. xvii. xix. and by our Lord himself, Matt. xxi. 33. The Christian church, after her redemption, by the death and resurrection of Jesus, was planted in the Heathen world, as Israel had been in Canaan; and the description suits the one as well as the other.

“ 9. Thou preparedst *room* before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. 10. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof *were like* the goodly cedars; *or*, and the goodly cedars *were covered* with the boughs thereof.”

As the vine striketh its roots deep into the soil prepared for it, and then diffuseth its numerous branches all around, covering the fertile hills, by the sides of which it is planted, or running up the lofty cedars, to the bodies of which it is joined; such was the growth and fruitfulness of the Israelitish church; but much greater was that of the church Christian. Her roots were fast fixed in the hearts and affections of the faithful, and her boughs shot forth abundantly; they often felt the knife, but increased under it, both in number and vigour; till, at length, she overshadowed the Roman empire with her branches, and

replenished the earth with her fruit, grateful to God and man.

“ 11. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.”

This relates to the extent of Palestine, which was occupied by the tribes of Israel, even from the Mediterranean “ sea,” westward, to the “ river” Euphrates, eastward. This was promised, Deut. xi. 24. “ From the river Euphrates to the uttermost sea shall your coast be;” and fulfilled in the days of Solomon. See 1 Kings iv. 21. Psalm lxxii. 8. To the Christian church the whole earth was the land of promise, and the Gospel was preached to all nations. “ I will give thee,” saith Jehovah to Christ, “ the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” Psalm ii. 8.

“ 12. Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way, do pluck her?”

The Psalmist, having described the exaltation of Israel, under the figure of a vine, proceeds, under the same figure, to lament her depression. She is now represented as deprived of the protection of God, the counsels of the wise, and the arms of the valiant; of all her bulwarks and fortifications, and whatever else could contribute to her defence and security; so that, like a vineyard without a fence, she lay open, on every side, to the incursions and ravages of her neighbouring adversaries; who soon stripped her of all that was valuable, and trod her under foot.

“ 13. The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.”

Fierce, and unrelenting, her heathen persecutor issued, at different times, from his abode, like a “ wild boar” out of the forest; resolved not only to spoil and plunder, but to eradicate and extirpate her for ever. Nor let the Christian church imagine, that these things relate only to her elder sister. Greater mercies, and more excellent gifts, should excite in her greater thankfulness, and call forth more excellent virtues; otherwise, they will serve only to enhance her account, and multiply her sorrows. If she sin, and fall after the same example of unbelief, she must not think to be distinguished in her punishment, unless by the severity of it. She may expect to see the favour of heaven withdrawn, and the secular arm, instead of supporting, employed to crush her; her discipline may be annihilated, her unity broken, her doctrines perverted, her worship deformed, her practice corrupted, her possessions alienated, and her revenues seized; till at length the word be given from above, and some antichristian power be unchained, to execute upon her the full vengeance due to her crimes. Unclean desires, and furious passions, are the enemies of the soul, which deface her beauty, and devour all the productions of grace, in that lesser vineyard of God.

“ 14. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; 15. And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself.”

The church, thus distressed and desolated, offereth a prayer for the return of the divine favour, and for a gracious visitation from on high ; she beseecheth God to look down, with an eye of pity, from heaven, on the vineyard which his own hands had “planted,” and on that royal branch, the family of David, in particular, which he had raised and established for himself, to accomplish his eternal purpose of saving mankind by Messiah, who was one day to spring from the root of Jesse. The Chaldee Paraphrast expounds “the branch,” of Messiah himself,— צל מלכא משיחא, “on King Messiah, whom thou hast established,” &c. So do the Rabbies, Aben Ezra, and Obadiah, cited by Dr. Hammond. And the LXX, instead of supposing the כן “a son,” to refer to “vine,” and so signify a “branch,” which in the Hebrew style, is “a son of the vine,” have rendered the passage, ἐπὶ υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου, “on the son of man;” an expression actually used by the Psalmist, two verses below. To the advent of this Son of Man, Israel was ever accustomed to look forward, in time of affliction: on his second and glorious advent, the Christian church must fix her eye, in the day of her calamities.

“16. *It is burnt with fire: it is cut down, or dug up: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.*”

The sad estate of the vineyard is yet again set forth, to excite the compassion of heaven. As to the latter clause of this verse, if it be rendered, as our translators have rendered it, in the present time, it seems to relate to the Israelites, and the destruction made amongst them by the wrath of God. If

it have a future rendering, "they shall perish at the rebuke of thy countenance," it may be supposed to predict the fate of the adversaries, when God should deliver his people out of their hands.

"17. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man, *whom* thou madest strong for thyself."

These phrases, "the man of thy right hand," and "the son of man," if at all applicable in a lower and subordinate sense, to a temporal king of Israel, considered as a representative of Messiah, are most certainly, in their full and prophetical acceptation, intended to denote King Messiah himself.* Assured of his coming, the church prayeth, that the "hand," the protection, and the power of Jehovah might be "upon" him, over him, and with him in his great undertaking, finally to deliver her out of all her troubles, and to "lead her captivity captive."

"18. So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name."

The end of our redemption is, that we should serve him who hath redeemed us, and "go back" no more to our old sins. That soul which hath been "quicken" and made alive by Christ, should live to his honour and glory; that mouth which hath been opened by him, can do no less than show forth his praise, and "call upon his saving "name."

* "Virum dexteræ tuæ:" Davidem a te designatum et confirmatum regem, et in ejus figura Christum. BOSSUET.

“ 19. Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.”—
See verse 3.

PSALM LXXXI.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm, whensoever, or by whomsoever composed, was, probably, intended to be sung at the feast of trumpets, as also at any other feast time. It contains, 1—3. an exhortation duly to observe the festivals of the church, 4, 5. as God had appointed, who is introduced expostulating with his people, on account, 6—10. of his mercies, and, 11, 12. their ingratitude, and in 13—16. under the form of a most affectionate wish, renewing his promises, on condition of their obedience.

“ 1. SING aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. 2. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.”

If Israelites were thus exhorted to keep their feast days, with joy and gladness of heart: to exalt their voices, and join together all their sweetest instruments of music, in honour of him who had rescued them from the Egyptian bondage, and given them a law from Sinai; in what exulting strains ought we to celebrate the festivals of the Christian church? With what triumph of soul, and harmony of affections, are we bound to “sing aloud to God our strength,” who hath redeemed us from death, and published the Gospel from Sion? since, as the Apostle saith, “holy days, new moons, and sabbath days,” of old, “were” only “a shadow of things to come: but the body is of Christ.” Col. ii. 16.

“ 3. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed on our solemn feast-day.”

In the Jewish church, notice was given of feasts, jubilees, &c. by sound of trumpet. All the new moons, or beginnings of months, were observed in this manner; see Numb. x. 1. but on the September new moon, or first day of the seventh month, was kept a great festival, called “the feast of trumpets;” Levit. xxiii. 24. Numb. xxix. 1. which, probably, is here intended. This September new moon had a particular regard paid to it, because, according to the old calculation, before Israel came out of Egypt, it was the first new moon in the year, which began upon this day, the first of the (afterwards) seventh month. The tenth of the same month was the great day of atonement; and on the fifteenth was celebrated the feast of tabernacles. See Levit. xxiii. 27, and 34. Our Psalm, therefore, seems to have been designed for the purpose of awakening and stirring up the devotion of the people upon the solemn entrance of a month, in which they were to commemorate so many past blessings, prefigurative of much greater blessings to come. We have now our feast-days, our Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, &c. On these, and all other solemn occasions, let the evangelical trumpet give a sound of victory, of liberty, of joy and rejoicing; of victory over death, of liberty from sin, of joy and rejoicing in Christ Jesus our Saviour.

“ For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. 5. This he ordained in Joseph, for a testimony, when he went out through, or

against, the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not."

The meaning is, that the observation of feasts, with blowing of trumpets, was a statute, law, or testimony, ordained in Joseph, or Israel, by God himself, after he had destroyed the Egyptians, and brought his people into the wilderness, where the law was given. Concerning the words, "I heard a language that I understood not," it is difficult to account for the change of person; but the sense seems to be, that the children of Israel received the law, when they had been in bondage under a people of strange and barbarous language, or dialect. The passage is exactly parallel to that in Psalm cxiv. 1. "When Israel went out of Egypt, and the house of Jacob from a people of strange language," &c. The new law, with its sacraments and ordinances, was promulgated after the spiritual redemption by Christ, as the old law, with its rites and ceremonies, was published, after the temporal deliverance by Moses.

"6. I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots."

From this verse to the end, it is plain, that God is the speaker. He reminds Israel of their redemption, by his mercy, and power, from the burdens and the drudgery imposed on them in Egypt. Moses describeth their then state of servitude, by saying, "The Egyptians made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field;" *Exod. i. 14.* that is, probably, in making vessels of clay, as this verse seems

to imply. Let us remember, that we have been eased of far heavier burdens, delivered from severer task-masters, and freed from a baser drudgery; the intolerable load of sin, the cruel tyranny of Satan, the vile service and bitter bondage of concupiscence.

“ 7. Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee: I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah.”

God declares his readiness, at all times, to hear the prayers, and relieve the distresses of his people, as he did when they cried unto him in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and received answers from the cloudy pillar. In that deep recess he had fixed his awful throne, and from thence, on proper occasions, he manifested his power and glory, protecting Israel, and confounding their adversaries. In Psalm xcix. 6. it is said “ of Moses, Aaron,” &c. “ They called upon the Lord, and he answered them: he spake unto them in the cloudy pillar;” which passage seems exactly parallel to that in the verse under consideration—“ Thou calledst, and—I answered thee in the secret place of thunder.” He who spake unto Israel in the cloudy pillar, hath since spoken to us by his Son: he who “ proved them at the waters of Meribah,” Exod. xvii. 6, 7. now proves us, by various trials, in the world.

“ 8. Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me: 9. There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. 10. I *am* the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.”

God here addresseth himself to the Israelites, putting them in remembrance of that first and great commandment against idolatry; of his claim to their obedience, as their God and Saviour; and of his being both able and willing to satisfy the utmost desires and wishes of such as would apply to Him for blessing and comfort. Behold then, the rebellion, the ingratitude, and the folly of that man, who saith to any creature, “Thou art my God:” who bestoweth on the world that fear, love, and adoration, which are due only to its Creator and Redeemer; who wasteth his days in seeking after happiness where all, by their inquietude, acknowledge that it is not to be found.

“11. But my people, would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me. 12. So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: *and* they walked in their own counsels.”

By the subject of an earthly prince, it is justly deemed a great honour for his sovereign to converse with him; to counsel, and advise him: but from sinful dust and ashes, we hear the Majesty of heaven complaining, that he cannot obtain an audience: no one will attend to, or observe his salutary admonitions. When we see men enabled, by wealth and power, to accomplish the inordinate desires of their hearts, and carry their worldly schemes into execution, without meeting with any obstructions in their way, we are apt to envy their felicity; whereas such prosperity in wickedness is the surest mark of divine displeasure, the heaviest punishment of disobedience, both in individuals and communities. “My

people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me; so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels."

" 13. O that my people had hearkened unto me, *and* Israel had walked in my ways! 14. I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries."

Such are the tender mercies of our God, that he is not only careful to provide for us the means of salvation, but represents himself as mourning, with a paternal affection, over his children, when their frowardness and obstinacy disappoint the efforts of his love. One cannot help observing the similitude between the complaint here uttered, and one which hath been since breathed forth, over the same people; " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

" 15. The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him; *or*, should have failed, *or* been subdued to him; but their time, that is, *the time of his people*, should have endured for ever."

The transgressions of the church give her enemies all their power against her, calling the avenger from afar, and setting an edge on the sword of the persecutor. " Where the carcass is," where the Spirit of religion is departed, and has left the body to corrupt and decay, " there the eagles are gathered together;" all the instruments of vengeance, terres-

trial and infernal, flock by permission to the prey. Had not this been the case with regard to Israel, Jerusalem had continued to be through all ages, what she was in the days of Solomon, the delight of the nations, and the joy of the whole earth.

“ 16. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat; and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.”

That is, the Israelites, if obedient, would still have enjoyed the sweets of that good land, in which the Lord their God had placed them, where the fruits of the earth were produced in the highest perfection, and honey streamed from the very rocks, so that no part of the country was without its increase. Upon the same conditions of faith and obedience, do Christians hold those spiritual and eternal good things, of which the pleasant fields and fertile hills of Canaan were sacramental. Christ is the “bread” of life, he is the “rock” of salvation, and his promises are as “honey” to pious minds. But they who reject him, as their Lord and Master, must also lose him, as their Saviour and their Reward.

PSALM LXXXII.

Sixteenth Day.—Evening Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—The Psalmist addresseth himself to judges and magistrates; 1. he remindeth them of the presence of that God whom they represent, and to whom they are accountable; 2—4. he exhorteth them to the due discharge of their office; 5. reproveth the ignorance and corruption among them; 6, 7. threateneth their fall and punishment; 8. prayeth for the manifestation of Messiah, and the establishment of his righteous kingdom.

“ 1. GOD standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods.”

Earthly judicatories are the appointment of God. All magistrates act in his name, and by virtue of his commission. He is invisibly present in their assemblies, and superintends their proceedings. He receives appeals from their wrongful decisions; he will one day rehear all causes at his own tribunal, and reverse every iniquitous sentence, before the great congregation of men and angels. Unjust judges must either disbelieve or forget all this. God is, in like manner, present to the heart of each individual; he is privy to the various reasonings and pleadings of grace and nature, of principle and interest, in that lesser court; and he is a witness of its determinations; which also will by him be manifested to the world, and openly canvassed, when he sitteth in judgment.

“ 2. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? 3. Defend the

poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. 4. Deliver the poor and needy: rid *them* out of the hand of the wicked."

A charge is here given, by the Spirit of God, to all magistrates, much like that, which king Jehoshaphat gave to his judges, 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7. "Take heed what ye do; for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now, let the fear of the Lord be upon you, take heed and do it; for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts." It is the glory of Jehovah and his Christ, to "accept no man's person" in judgment; to regard neither the quality, nor the station of the offender; but to give to every man, of whatever rank or degree in the world, according to his works. All the sons of Adam were once "poor and fatherless, needy and afflicted," when God took their own cause into his own hands, and by a method consistent with the strictest justice, "delivered them out of the hand of the wicked one." Every oppressor of the poor is a likeness of "that wicked one," and every upright judge, will endeavour to resemble the Redeemer. For this purpose, he will be always willing to admit, diligent to discuss, solicitous to expedite the cause of a poor and injured person, and to afford such a one the speediest, the cheapest, and the most effectual redress, equally contemning the offers of opulence, and the frowns of power. A judge who acts in this manner, takes the readiest way to obtain the favour of God; and the people will be sure to bless him.

“ 5. They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth, *or*, the land, are out of course; *or*, nod, *or*, shake.”

We here find the prophet deploring, in magistrates, a method of proceeding contrary to that above described. He laments their voluntary ignorance in the ways of righteousness, and their choosing to “walk in darkness.” In judges this is occasioned by “presents and gifts,” which, as saith the son of Sirach, “blind the eyes of the wise,” Ecclus. xx. 29. And if once the “pillars” and “foundations” are moved from their integrity, and “shaken” to and fro by every blast of fear and favour, what shall become of the political fabric erected upon them? Verily it must fall; and great and terrible will be the fall thereof. A community, whether ecclesiastical or civil, consisteth of great numbers; but its well-being dependeth on a few, in whose hands the administration is placed. When the salt hath lost its savour, the mass must putrify; when the light becometh darkness, how great must be that darkness!

“ 6. I have said, *Ye are gods*, and all of you *are children of the Most High*. 7. But ye shall die like men, *or*, Adam, and fall like one of the princes.”

It is true, then, that magistrates are exalted above other men; that they are dignified with a commission from above; appointed to be the vicegerents of heaven upon earth; and therefore called

by the name of him in whose name they act. But it is likewise as true, that, notwithstanding all this honour conferred upon them, for the good of others, and of themselves, if they use it aright, they still continue to be the mortal sons of mortal "Adam;" like him, they must fall and perish; God can, at any time, cast them down from their high estate, as he did the heathen "princes" who misbehaved themselves, and opposed his counsels: death certainly will strip them of all their authority, and lay them low in the grave; from thence the last trumpet shall call them forth, to stand, with the rest of their brethren, before the judgment-seat of Christ, there to take their trial, and receive their everlasting sentence. How necessary oftentimes is this consideration, to check the spirit of tyranny and injustice, to qualify the pride and insolence of office.

"8. Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations."

A view of that disorder and confusion in which frequently the Jewish nation, as well as the rest of the world, was involved, caused the prophets most earnestly to wish and pray for the coming of that time when "God" should "arise," in the person of Messiah, to visit and "judge the earth;" to deliver it from the powers of darkness, and the tyranny of sin; to "inherit all nations," as purchased and redeemed by him; to establish his church among them; and to rule with a sceptre of righteousness in the hearts of his people. "Arise" yet once again, O Lord Jesus, from thy throne, where

thou sittest at the right hand of the Father; “judge the earth,” again corrupted and overwhelmed with iniquity; do away sin, and put an end for ever to the power of Satan; “inherit all nations,” redeemed from death, and ransomed from the grave; and reign to eternity, King of Righteousness, Peace, and Glory.

PSALM LXXXIII.

ARGUMENT.—In this Psalm the church, 1—8. complaineth to God of the insolence, subtilty, rage, and malice, of her enemies, united in close confederacy against her; 9—12. she prayeth for a manifestation of that power which formerly discomfited Jabin, Sisera, and the Midianites; that so the hostile nations, 13—15. made sensible of the superiority of Israel’s God, 16—18. might either themselves be induced to acknowledge him, or else, by their destruction, become a warning and admonition to others. As, while the world endureth there will be a church, and while there is a church she will have her enemies, who are to increase upon her as the end approacheth, this Psalm can never be out of date. And to the spiritual adversaries of his soul, every private Christian may apply it at all times.

“1. KEEP not thou silence, O God; hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God. 2. For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult; and they that hate thee have lifted up their head.”

The church entreateth God again and again to hear and help her in the day of trouble. Her enemies and haters are here said to be the enemies and haters of God, because Christ and the church, like man and wife, are one; they have one com-

mon interest; they have the same friends and the same foes. To him therefore she applieth, terrified by the tumultuous noise of confederated nations roaring against her like the roaring of the sea, and “lifting up their heads,” as so many monsters of the deep, to devour her at once. When temptations are urgent upon the soul, and the passions rise in arms against her peace and innocence, then do “the enemies of God make a tumult, and they that hate him lift up their heads;” and then is the time for her to be instant in prayer.

“3. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. 4. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.”

The combination, so much dreaded, is described as having been formed upon the best principles of secular policy, with much subtilty, and the most determinate malice, against the “people” of God, and his “hidden ones,” that is, his peculiar nation, separated from the world, and taken under the cover and protection of his wings. To root up the plantations of paradise, to extirpate the holy seed, to extinguish the very “name of Israel,” was the scheme intended by these associated adversaries of Sion. Such are our spiritual enemies; such is their cunning, their rage, and their resolution: what prudence, what vigilance, what courage are necessary, that we may oppose them with success!

“5. For they have consulted together with one consent; they are confederate against thee.”

When Christ was about to be crucified, it is observed by St. Luke, that “the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves:” Luke xxiii. 12. And however the enemies of the church may quarrel with one another, when they have nothing else to do, yet if a favourable opportunity offer itself for making an attack upon her, they lay aside their differences, and unite as one man; by no means refusing the friendly aid even of infidels and atheists, who are always ready to join in carrying on the war against the common adversary.

“6. The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; 7. Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines, with the inhabitants of Tyre: 8. Assur is also joined with them; they have holpen the children of Lot.”

These are the names of the confederates. The Edomites were descended from Esau, that old original enemy of Jacob; the Ishmaelites from Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman, and sworn foe to Isaac, heir of the promises; the Moabites sprang from Moab, one of the incestuous children of Lot; the Hagarenes were other descendants of Hagar; who the Gebalites were is uncertain; the Ammonites came from Ammon, the son of Lot, and incestuous brother of Moab; the Amalekites were the progeny of Amalek, the grandson of Esau, Gen. xxvi. 16. the Philistines and Tyrians are well known; and to complete all, Assur, or the power of Assyria, was called in by the children of Lot, the Moabites and Ammonites, to assist in the great

work of exterminating Israel from the face of the earth. These were the ten nations banded together, by a solemn league and covenant, against the people of God. And as Israel was the grand figure of the Christian church, which is now “the Israel of God,” so her enemies are often represented by the above-recited nations, and in prophetic language are called by their names. Every age has its Edomites, and its Ishmaelites, &c. The actors are changed, and the scenes are shifted; but the stage and the drama continue the same.

“9. Do unto them as *unto* the Midianites; as *to* Sisera, as *to* Jabin, at the brook of Kison: 10. Which perished at Endor: they became *as* dung for the earth. 11. Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zeba and as Zalmunna: 12. Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.”

The church, having recounted the enemies which compassed her about on every side, looks up for succour to that Almighty power which had of old so graciously interposed on her behalf, and rescued her from her persecutors, in the days of Deborah; Barak, and Gideon: see Judges iv. viii. Fully sensible that those deliverances were wrought by the immediate hand of Jehovah, she offers the prayer of faith for a like manifestation of his glory, and a like victory over those who intended, in the same manner, to seize and devour his inheritance. Of how great use and comfort are the Old Testament histories to us, in all our afflictions!

“ 13. O my God, make them like a wheel; *or*, like thistle-down; as the stubble before the wind. 14. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; 15. So persecute, *or*, thou shalt pursue, them with thy tempest, and make, *or*, thou shalt make, them afraid with thy storm.”

The fate of those is here predicted, who invade the inheritance of Jehovah, and say, “ Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.” The inconstancy and mutability of their fortunes is resembled to “ thistle-down,” or some such light revolving body, and to “ stubble” or chaff, whirled about and dissipated by the “ wind:” the suddenness, horror, and universality of their destruction, are set forth by the similitude of a “ fire” consuming the dry trees in a “ forest,” or some combustible matter on the “ mountains.” Such is the storm and tempest of God’s indignation, which pursues and terrifies the sacrilegious and ungodly.

“ 16. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord. 17. Let them, *or*, they shall, be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them, *or*, they shall, be put to shame and perish: 18. That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, *art* the Most High over all the earth.”

The punishments inflicted by heaven upon wicked men, are primarily intended to humble and convert them. If they continue incorrigible under every dispensation of merciful severity, they are at last cut off, and finally destroyed; that others, admonished

by their example, may repent, and return, and give glory to God. Salutary are the afflictions which bring men, and happy the men who are brought by them, to an acknowledgment of "JEHOVAH our Righteousness," our exalted and glorified Redeemer, "the Most High over all the earth;" whom all must acknowledge, and before whom all must appear to be judged, in the great and terrible day.

PSALM LXXXIV.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm, for the subject-matter of it, bears a resemblance to the xlii. Under the figure of an Israelite, deprived of all access to Jerusalem and the sanctuary (whether it were David when driven away by Absalom, or any other person in like circumstances at a different time), we are presented with, 1, 2. the earnest longing of a devout soul after the house and presence of God; 3—7. a beautiful and passionate eulogy on the blessedness of his ministers and servants; 8—10. a fervent prayer for a participation of that blessedness; and, 11, 12. an act of faith in his power and goodness, which render him both able and willing to grant requests of this nature.

1. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!

Thus ardently doth a banished Israelite express his love for Sion, his admiration of the beauty of holiness. Nay, Balaam himself, when from the top of Peor he saw the children of Israel abiding in their tents, with the Glory in the midst of them, could not help exclaiming, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" Numb. xxiv. 5. "How amiable" then, may the

Christian say, are those eternal mansions, from whence sin and sorrow are excluded; how goodly that camp of the saints, and that beloved city, where righteousness and joy reign triumphant, and peace and unity are violated no more; where thou, O blessed Jesus, "Lord of hosts," King of men and angels, dwellest in glorious majesty, constituting by thy presence the felicity of thy chosen!

"2. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out, or, shouteth, for the living God."

It is said of the queen of Sheba, that upon beholding the pleasantness of Jerusalem, the splendour of Solomon's court, and, above all, the magnificence of the temple, with the services therein performed, "there was no more spirit in her:" 1 Kings x. 5. What wonder, therefore, if the soul should be affected, even to sickness and fainting, while, from this land of her captivity, she beholdeth, by faith, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city and court of the great King, with all the transporting glories of the church triumphant: while, in her meditations, she draweth the comparison between her wretched state of exile upon earth, and the unspeakable blessedness of being delivered from temptation and affliction, and admitted into the everlasting "courts of Jehovah?" Whose "heart and flesh" doth not exult, and "shout" aloud for joy, at a prospect of rising from the bed of death, to dwell with "the living God;" to see the face of him, "in whom is life, and the life is the "light of men?" John i. 4. Did the Israelites, from all parts of Judea, go

up, with the voice of jubilee, to keep a feast at Jerusalem; and shall Christians grieve, when the time is come for them to ascend, and to celebrate an eternal festival in heaven?

“ 3. Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow, or, ringdove, a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, *even* thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.”

The Psalmist is generally supposed, in this verse, to lament his unhappiness, in being deprived of all access to the tabernacle, or temple, a privilege enjoyed even by the birds, who were allowed to build their nests in the neighbourhood of the sanctuary. It is evidently the design of this passage to intimate to us, that in the house, and at the altar of God, a faithful soul findeth freedom from care and sorrow, quiet of mind, and gladness of spirit; like a bird, that has secured a little mansion, for the reception and education of her young. And there is no heart, endued with sensibility, which doth not bear its testimony to the exquisite beauty and propriety of this affecting image.

“ 4. Blessed *are* they that dwell in thy house: they will be, *or*, are, still praising thee.”

Here the metaphor is dropped, and the former sentiment expressed in plain language. “Blessed are,” not the mighty and opulent of the earth, but “they that dwell in thy house,” the ministers of the eternal temple in heaven, the angels and the spirits of just men made perfect; there every passion is resolved into love, every duty into praise; hallelujah

succeeds hallelujah; “they are still,” still for ever, “praising thee.” And blessed, next to them, are those ministers and members of the church here below who, in disposition, as well as employment, do most resemble them.”

“5. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee: in whose heart *are* the ways of *them*; Heb. the ways are in the heart of them.”

Not only they are pronounced blessed who “dwell” in the temple, but all they also who are “travelling” thitherward (as the whole Jewish nation was wont to do three times in a year), and who are therefore meditating on their “journey,” and on the “way” which leadeth to the holy city, trusting in God to “strengthen,” and prosper, and conduct them to the house of his habitation, the place where his glory dwelleth. Such a company of sojourners are Christians, going up to the heavenly Jerusalem: such ought to be their trust in God, and such the subject of their thoughts.*

“6. *Who*, passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well: the rain also filleth the pools.

* In ejus animo versantur semitæ ferentes ad templum quo properat. Morali sensu; quicumque sanctus est, quotidie in priora extenditur, et præteritorum obliviscitur, cum Paulo, Phil. iii. 13: Bossuet. Jerusalem is represented in the New Testament as a type of heaven. I see nothing irrational, therefore, in supposing, that the inspired writer, in describing the ascent to Jerusalem, might have in view also that spiritual progress, leading to the city which is above, the mother of us all. The words before us are certainly very applicable to the advances made, in this progress, from strength to strength, from one stage of Christian perfection to another. Merrick,

7. They go from strength to strength, *every one of them* in Zion appeareth before God; *or*, the God of gods appeareth, *that is, to them* in Zion."

After numberless uncertain conjectures offered by commentators upon the construction of these two verses, it seemeth impossible for us to attain to any other than a general idea of their true import; which is this, that the Israelites, or some of them, passed, in their way to Jerusalem, through a valley that had the name of "Baca," a noun, derived from a verb which signifies to "weep;" that in this valley they were refreshed by plenty of water; that with renewed vigour they proceeded from stage to stage, until they presented themselves before God in Zion. The present world is to us this valley of weeping; in our passage through it, we are refreshed by the streams of divine grace, flowing down from the great fountain of consolation; and thus are we enabled to proceed from one degree of holiness to another, until we come to the glorified vision of God in heaven itself. Mr. Merrick's poetical version of this passage is extremely beautiful, and applies at once to the case of the Israelite, and to that of the Christian:

Blest who, their strength on thee reclin'd,
 Thy seat explore with constant mind,
 And, Salem's distant towers in view,
 With active zeal their way pursue:
 Secure the thirsty vale they tread,
 While, call'd from out their sandy bed
 (As, down in grateful showers distill'd,
 The heavens their kindest moisture yield),
 The copious springs their steps beguile,
 And bid the cheerless desert smile.

From stage to stage advancing still,
Behold them reach fair Sion's hill,
And, prostrate at her hallow'd shrine,
Adore the Majesty divine.

“ 8. O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. 9. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.”

After extolling the happiness of those who dwelt in the temple, and of those who had access to it, the Psalmist breaks forth into a most ardent prayer to his God, for a share in that happiness. He addresseth him as “the Lord of hosts,” almighty in power; as “the God of Jacob,” infinite in mercy and goodness to his people; as their “shield,” the object of all their trust for defence and protection; and beseecheth him to “look upon the face of his anointed,” that is, of David, if he were king of Israel when this Psalm was written; or rather of Messiah,* in whom God is always well pleased; for whose sake he hath mercy upon us, through whose name and merits our prayers are accepted, and the kingdom of heaven is opened to all believers.

“ 10. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

One day spent in meditation and devotion, affordeth a pleasure, far, far superior to that which an age of worldly prosperity could give. Happier

* “Christu tui;” regis, qui Christi figura. Bossuet.

is the least and lowest of the servants of Jesus, than the greatest and most exalted potentate who knoweth him not. And he is no proper judge of blessedness, who hesitates a moment to prefer the condition of a penitent in the porch, to that of a sinner on the throne. If this be the case upon earth, how much more in heaven? O come that one glorious day, whose sun shall never go down, nor any cloud obscure the lustre of his beams; that day, when the temple of God shall be opened in heaven, and we shall be admitted to serve him for ever therein!

“ 11. For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

Jesus Christ is our “ Lord,” and our “ God;” he is a “ sun” to enlighten and direct us in the way, and a “ shield” to protect us against the enemies of our salvation; he will give “ grace” to carry us on “ from strength to strength,” and “ glory” to crown us when we “ appear before him in Zion:” he will “ withhold” nothing that is “ good” and profitable for us in the course of our journey, and will himself be our reward when we come to the end of it.

“ 12. O LORD of hosts, blessed *is* the man that trusteth in thee.”

While, therefore, we are strangers and sojourners here below, far from that heavenly country where we would be, in whom should we trust to bring us to the holy city, new Jerusalem, of which the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple, but in thee, O

Saviour and Redeemer, who art the Head of every creature, the Captain of the armies of heaven and earth, the Lord of hosts, and the King of glory? “Blessed,” thrice “blessed, is the man that trusteth in thee.”

PSALM LXXXV.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm, appointed by the church to be used on Christmas-day, 1—3. celebrateth the redemption of the Israel of God from their spiritual captivity under sin and death; 4—7. teacheth us to pray for the full accomplishment of that redemption in ourselves; 8—11. describeth the incarnation of Christ, with the joyful meeting of Mercy and Truth, Righteousness and Peace, at his birth, and, 12, 13. the blessed effects of his advent.

“1. LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. 2. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. 3. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.”

These three verses speak of the deliverance from captivity, as already brought about; whereas, in the subsequent parts of the Psalm, it is prayed for and predicted, as a thing future. To account for this, some suppose that the Psalmist first returns thanks for a temporal redemption, and then prophesies of the spiritual salvation by Messiah. Others are of opinion, that the same eternal redemption is spoken of throughout, but represented, in the beginning of the Psalm, as already accomplished in the divine de-

cree, though the eventual completion was yet to come. The difficulty, perhaps, may be removed, by rendering these first three verses in the present time; "LORD, thou art favourable to thy land, thou bringest back the captivity of thy people," &c. that is, Thou art the God whose property it is to do this, and to show such mercy to thy people, who therefore call upon thee for the same. But, indeed, to us Christians, who now use the Psalm, the difference is not material; since a part of our redemption is past, and a part of it is yet to come, for the hastening of which latter we daily pray. God hath already been exceedingly gracious and "favourable" to the whole "earth," in "bringing back," by the resurrection of Jesus, the spiritual "captivity of" his people; he hath himself, in Christ, "borne," and so taken away, "the iniquity of his people;" he hath "covered all their sins," that they should no more appear in judgment against them: propitiated by the Son of his love, he hath removed his "wrath," and "turned himself from the fierceness of his anger." So exactly and literally do these words describe the means and method of Gospel salvation, that a Christian can hardly affix any other ideas to them.

"4. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger towards us to cease. 5. Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? 6. Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee? 7. Show us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation."

The ancient church is here introduced as petitioning for the continuation and completion of those blessings which had been mentioned in the foregoing verses, namely, that God would “turn” his people from their captivity, and “cause his anger towards them to cease;” that he would “revive” them from sin and sorrow, and give them occasion to “rejoice in him,” their mighty deliverer; that he would “show them” openly that “mercy” of which they had so often heard, and “grant them that salvation,” or that “Saviour,” that JESUS, who had been so long promised to mankind. And although it be true that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and hath virtually procured all these blessings for the church, yet do “we” still continue to pray, in the same words, for the actual application of them all to ourselves, by the conversion of our hearts, the justification of our persons, the sanctification of our souls, and the glorification of our bodies. For this last blessing of redemption, “the whole creation waiteth, groaning, and travailing in pain together, UNTIL NOW.” Rom. viii. 22.

“8. I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints; but let them not turn again to folly: *or*, that they may not turn again to folly.”

The prophet having prayed, in the name of the church, that Jehovah would “show them his mercy, and grant them his salvation,” declares himself resolved, concerning this “salvation, to inquire and search diligently, what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in him did signify, when

it testified beforehand the coming of Christ, and the glory that should follow;" see 1 Pet. i. 10. he would attend to "what God the LORD should say," and report it to the world. Now, what was the message which the prophets had commission to deliver from God, but that he would "speak peace," or reconciliation through a Saviour, "to his people, and to his saints?" The Gospel is accordingly styled by St. Peter, "the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ:" Acts x. 36. And what was the end of this reconciliation between God and men, but that men should become and continue the servants of God; that, being washed from their sins by the blood of Christ, and renewed in their minds by the grace of Christ, they should walk in the paths of wisdom and holiness, and "turn not again to the folly" they had renounced?

"9. Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him, that glory may dwell in our land."

God, who "calleth things that be not as though they were," teacheth his prophets to do likewise. The Psalmist therefore speaks with assurance of the "Saviour," as if he then saw him before his eyes, healing, by the word of his power, the bodies and the souls of men upon earth, and manifesting forth his "glory," in human nature, to all such as, with a holy "fear," and filial reverence, believed on him. St. John himself hardly useth plainer language when he saith, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt, or tabernacled, among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the

Father, full of grace and truth :” John i. 14. The body of Christ was the true “tabernacle,” or temple; his Divinity was the GLORY which resided there, and filled that holy place. The church is his mystical “body;” by his Spirit he now and ever “dwelleth in our land; and his salvation is always nigh them that fear him :” as saith the holy Virgin in her song, “His mercy is on them that fear him, throughout all generations.”

“10. Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed *each other*. 11. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.”

These four divine attributes parted at the fall of Adam, and met again at the birth of Christ. Mercy was ever inclined to save man, and Peace could not be his enemy; but Truth exacted the performance of God’s threat, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die;” and Righteousness could not but give to every one his due. Jehovah must be true in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. Now there is no religion upon earth, except the Christian, which can satisfy the demands of all these claimants, and restore an union between them; which can show how God’s word can be true, and his work just, and the sinner, notwithstanding, find mercy, and obtain peace. Mahomet’s prayer, were it the prayer of a righteous man and a prophet, could not satisfy divine justice; the blood of bulls and goats was always insufficient for that purpose, being a figure only for the time then present, which ceased

of course when the reality appeared. "Sacrifice and burnt-offering thou wouldst not; then said I, Lo, I come." A God incarnate reconciled all things in heaven and earth. When Christ appeared in our nature, the promise was fulfilled, and "Truth sprang out of the earth." And now Righteousness, "looking down from heaven," beheld in him every thing that she required; an undefiled birth, a holy life, an innocent death; a spirit and a mouth without guile, a soul and a body without sin. She saw, and was satisfied, and returned to earth. Thus all the four parties met again in perfect harmony: Truth ran to Mercy, and embraced her; Righteousness to Peace, and kissed her. And this could happen only at the birth of Jesus, in whom "the tender Mercy of our God visited us, and who is the Truth; who is made unto us Righteousness, and who is our Peace." See Luke i. 78. John xiv. 6. 1 Cor. i. 30. Ephes. ii. 14. Those that are thus joined, as attributes, in Christ, ought not, as virtues, to be separated in a Christian, who may learn how to resemble his blessed Lord and Master, by observing that short, but complete, rule of life, comprehended in the few following words: Show Mercy, and speak Truth: do Righteousness, and follow Peace. See St. Bernard, in his Sermon on the Annunciation; and, from him, bishop Andrews on these two verses of our Psalm.*

* *Solutâ captivitate, felicem populi statum designat, omni bonorum copiâ et virtutibus florentis; quæ maximè impleta sunt, postquam Christus, ipsa veritas, idemque pax nostra, terrâ ortus est.* BOSSUET.

“ 12. Yea, the LORD shall give *that which is good*: and our land shall yield her increase.”

Unless God vouchsafe a gracious rain from above, the earth cannot “yield her increase.” The effects of the incarnation of Christ, the descent of the Spirit, and the publication of the Gospel among men, are frequently set forth in Scripture under images borrowed from that fruitfulness caused in the earth by the rain of heaven. Thus Isaiah: “Drop down ye heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together. xlv. 8. I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. xlv. 3. As the rain cometh down from heaven, and watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud; so shall my word be,” &c. lv. 10. Give us evermore, O Lord, “that which is good, that our land may yield her increase;” give us that good gift, the gift of thy Spirit, that we be “neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Pet. i. 8.

“ 13. Righteousness shall go before him, and shall set *us* in the way of his steps; *or*, and shall set his steps in the way.

Upon the appearance of the Redeemer, “Righteousness” is represented “as going before him,” like his harbinger the Baptist, to prepare and make

ready his way. In that way, the way of righteousness, “he set his steps,” and walked therein, without the least deviation, until he had finished his appointed course. Draw us, blessed Jesus, and we will run after thee, in the path of life; let thy mercy pardon us, thy truth enlighten us, thy righteousness direct us, to follow thee, O Lamb of God, whithersoever thou goest, through poverty, affliction, persecution, and death itself; that our portion may be for ever in thy kingdom of peace and love.

PSALM LXXXVI.

Seventeenth Day.—Morning Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm is entitled, “A prayer of David,” and supposed to have been written in some of his great distresses. Like others of the same kind, it is calculated for the use of the church during her sufferings here below, by which she is conformed to the image of the true David, that man of sorrows. It contains, 1. an earnest supplication, grounded on the poverty, 2. the holiness, faith, 3. importunity, and, 4. the devotion, of the suppliant; and on, 5—7. the goodness, and, 8. power of God, 9, 10. to be one day acknowledged by all nations, at their conversion. After this, follow, 11. a petition for wisdom, strength, and singleness of heart; 12, 13. a thanksgiving for redemption; 14. a complaint of persecution from the wicked; 15. an act of faith; 16, 17. a prayer for help and salvation.

“1. Bow down thine ear, O LORD, and hear me: for I *am* poor and needy.”

All prayer is founded on a sense of our own wants, and God’s ability to supply them. In the

sight of his Maker, every sinner is “poor and needy;” and he must become so in his own, that his petitions may be regarded; he must pray, with the humility and importunity of a starving beggar, at the gate of heaven, if he expect the great King “to bow down his ear and hear him.” “The prayer of the humble,” saith the wise son of Sirach, “pierceth the clouds: and till it come nigh, he will not be comforted; and will not depart till the Most High shall behold:” Ecclus. xxxv. 17. The blessed Jesus, “though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, and had not where to lay his head;” nor is it to be doubted, but that, in his state of humiliation, he oftentimes made his prayer to the Father in these very words; “Bow down thine ear, O LORD, and hear me; for I am poor and needy.” If he sued in such a form of words for us, shall we think of suing in any other form for ourselves?

“2. Preserve thou my soul, for I *am* holy; O thou my God, save thy servant, that trusteth in thee.”

The word here translated “holy,” is, חָסִיד, the same which is used in the xvth Psalm; “Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” And indeed, if we understand “holiness” in its strict sense, no one but “he whom the Father sanctified, and sent into the world,” to redeem lost man, could say to him, “Preserve my soul, for I am holy.” But the word properly signifies, “good, merciful, pious, devoted to the service of God,” &c. The Christian, therefore, only pleads, in this expression, his relation to Christ, as being a member of Christ’s

body, the church, and a partaker of the gifts, which, by virtue of that membership, he has received through the Spirit of holiness. So that this first part of the verse, "Preserve my soul, for I am holy," when repeated by us, is equivalent to another passage in the Psalms, "I am THINE, O save me:" cxix. 94. The latter member of the verse under consideration teaches us to pray for help and salvation, as the "servants" of God, whose eyes therefore look naturally to him, "as the eyes of servants," in affliction, look unto the hand of their masters:" Psalm cxxiii. 2. And happy, surely, are we in a Master, who himself, for our salvation, once lived, and prayed, and suffered, and died, in "the form of a servant." Phil. ii. 7.

"3. Be merciful unto me, O LORD, for I cry unto thee daily."

There is no man upon the earth, but needeth "mercy;" he who is truly sensible of his need, will "cry daily" for it; and he who doth so, may comfort himself with the hope of obtaining it. The prayers of Jesus, poured forth for the salvation of his mystical body, in the days of his flesh, were frequent and mighty; his intercession for us in heaven is continual. Does the man believe this, who prays not at all, or who prays without devotion?

"4. Rejoice the soul of thy servant; for unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul."

Sorrow was the portion of Christ in this world, and the church hath no reason to expect any other from it. He that would have real "joy" in his

heart, must beseech God to give it him, for no creature hath it to give. Nay, the love of the world must be renounced, before this divine gift can even be "received." The affections must be loosened from earth, and "lifted up" to heaven, on the wings of faith and love; for in the soul that is full of sensual pleasures and indulgences, there is neither room nor taste for spiritual delights.

"5. For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive: and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."

We are encouraged to "lift up our souls to God," in prayer, because his "goodness," and the "plenteousness of his mercy" in Christ Jesus, incline him to give his holy Spirit of peace and comfort to "all that call upon him." His favour is no longer confined to Judea; there is now no distinction of age, condition, or country: but the sinner, whoever or wherever he be, if he call upon the saving name of Jesus, is heard, pardoned, and accepted, upon the terms of the evangelical covenant.

"6. Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. 7. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee; for thou wilt answer me."

In confidence of an "answer," nourished and strengthened by all the foregoing considerations, the suppliant renews his prayer, while "the day of trouble" lasts; and that day will not end, but with this mortal pilgrimage; since he who loves his country, will ever be uneasy while he is detained among

strangers and enemies, perils and temptations. But the trouble is overpaid with profit, which rendereth us adepts in the practice of devotion, which convinceth us that we are abroad, and maketh us to wish and sigh for our true and only home.

“ 8. Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works.”

Another reason why application should be made to Jehovah, is his infinite superiority over all those that, by infatuated men, were ever called “ gods.” From the ancient idolatry, which taught adoration to the sun, moon, and stars, to the light and the air, we have been delivered by the Gospel: nor do we any longer profess to worship Jupiter, and the other Heathen gods and goddesses. But do not many still trust in idols, and have they not, in effect, other objects of worship, from whose hands they expect their reward? Are not the hearts of the covetous, the ambitious, the voluptuous, so many temples of Mammon or Plutus, of Jupiter or Mars, of Bacchus, Comus, and Venus? But what are these deities; what is their power; and what are their gifts? What is the whole world, and all that is therein, when compared with its Maker and Redeemer; what is it when applied to, for the ease and comfort of a wounded spirit?—“ Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works!”

“ 9. All nations whom thou hast made, shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.”

The Psalmist predicteth that this superiority of Jehovah should one day be acknowledged throughout all the earth, when “neither in Jerusalem only, nor in the mount of the Samaritans,” but in every place, “should men worship the Father;” John iv. 21. when he who “made all nations” by his Son, should by that Son redeem all nations, bringing them from the world to the church, there to “worship before” the true God, and “in songs, of praise to glorify his holy name.” If in these our times, we behold the nations again falling away from God, departing from the purity of their faith, and leaving their first love, let us comfort ourselves with looking forward to that scene of things described by St. John, in which we hope to bear a part hereafter; “I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” Rev. vii. 9.

“10. For thou *art* great, and doest wondrous things: thou *art* God alone.”

“Great” is Jehovah in his power, in his wisdom, in his mercy; “wonderful” in the creation of the world, wonderful in the preservation and the government of it, wonderful in its redemption; wonderful in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, in the descent of the Spirit, the propagation of the Gospel, the sufferings of saints,

and the conversion of sinners; most wonderful will he be when he shall raise the dead, judge the world, condemn the wicked, and glorify the righteous. And then shall every tongue confess, "Thou art God alone!"

"11. Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name."

It is the continual subject of the Mediator's intercession above, and of our prayers below, that we may be "taught the way of Jehovah," the way to life eternal, prepared for us, through faith and love which is in Christ Jesus; that being so taught, we may likewise be enabled "to walk in the truth," without error in doctrine, or deviation from duty; believing all things which God hath revealed, and doing whatsoever he hath commanded us; that the affections of the "heart" may be withdrawn from other objects, and, being no longer divided between God and the world, become "united" in the filial "fear of his name," as the grand principle of action.

"12. I will praise thee, O LORD my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify thy name for evermore. 13. For great is thy mercy towards me; and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell."

Gratitude for mercies already received, will obtain a continuance and increase of those mercies. The church is never in so afflicted a state, but she hath still reason to intermingle hallelujahs with her hosannas, and, in the midst of her most fervent prayers, to "praise the LORD her God with all her

heart, and to glorify his name for evermore;" since, whatever she may suffer upon earth (and even those sufferings will turn to her advantage), "great," most undoubtedly, "hath his mercy been toward her, in delivering" her, by the resurrection of Jesus, from the bondage of sin, the dominion of death, and the bottomless pit of "hell."

"14. O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent *men* have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before their eyes."

From praises we return again to prayers. When Christ was upon earth, we know the treatment he met with from "proud and violent men, who had not set God before their eyes;" from self-righteous Jews, and conceited Gentiles, who rose up, and took counsel together, against him. What his church afterwards suffered at the hands of the same enemies, is likewise well known. How much more she is to undergo in the latter days, we know not as yet; but this we do know, that the spirit of the world stands, now and ever, in opposition to the Spirit of God; its design is always the same, although its methods of working be divers. Nor can we be ignorant of those domestic adversaries, that assembly of haughty and turbulent passions, which are continually making insurrections, and destroying the peace of the soul. So that either from without, or from within, every one, who is a Christian in deed, shall be sure to have his portion of tribulation.

"15. But thou, O LORD, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious; long-suffering, and plenteous in goodness and truth."

Having taken a view of those that are against us, it is now time to look up to those that are with us. And can we have better friends, than all these gracious and favourable attributes of heaven? Can more comfortable and joyful tidings be brought us, than that God loveth us with a father's love; that he is ready to pardon, slow to anger; and that we have his truth pledged for the performance of his mercy? What a fountain of consolation is here opened for the afflicted Christian! "Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." Prov. xxxi. 7.

"16. O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid."

On the consideration of the above-mentioned attributes, a petition is in this verse put up to God, that he would "turn" his face towards us; that he would of his "mercy" pardon us, by his grace "strengthen" us, and by his power "save" us from all our adversaries. Every Christian is the "servant" of God, and "the son of his handmaid," the church; which may say, in the same spirit of humility and obedience with the blessed Virgin, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

"17. Show me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed; because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me."

Many outward signs and "tokens" of the divine favour were in old time vouchsafed to patriarchs, prophets, and kings of Israel. The law itself was

a collection of external and sacramental figures of grace and mercy. All these centred and had their accomplishment in that grand and everlasting sign and token of God's love to man, the incarnation of Christ, which all faithful people from the beginning wished and prayed for. On this sign, the Christian looks with joy, as the great proof that God has "holpen him and comforted him," while his faith in it doth not fail, he hath the witness in himself, and his actions declare as much to all around him; "that they which hate him may be "ashamed" and converted, before that day come, when shame shall be fruitless, and conversion impossible.

PSALM LXXXVII.

ARGUMENT.—The prophet, 1—3. celebrates the stability and felicity of Sion; 4, 5, foretels the accession of the Gentiles to her; and, 6. their enrolment among her citizens; 7. extols her as the fountain of grace and salvation. The Psalm was probably penned, on a survey of the city of David, just after the buildings of it were finished.

"1. His foundation is in the holy mountains: or, It is his, *that is*, God's foundation in the mountains of holiness!*. 2. The LORD loveth the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."

The Psalmist, after having meditated on the strength, the beauty, and the glory of Jerusalem,

* Some commentators suppose this verse to be a part of the title, which will then run thus, "For the sons of Korah, a Psalm; a song, when he laid the foundation on the holy mountains."

being smitten with the love of the holy city, and imagining the thoughts of his hearers, or readers, to have been employed on the same subject, breaks forth at once in this abrupt manner, "It is HIS foundation on the holy mountains." By "the holy mountains," are meant those hills of Judea, which Jehovah had chosen, and separated to himself from all others, whereon to construct the highly favoured city and temple. As the dwellings of Jacob, in the promised land, were beloved by him more than the dwellings of other nations, so he "loved the gates of Sion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Jerusalem was exalted and fortified by its situation; but much more so by the protection of the Almighty. What Jerusalem was, the Christian church is; "built" by God "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:" Ephes. ii. 20. It is, "HIS foundation in the holy mountains;" she is beloved of God above the kingdoms and empires of the earth, which rise and fall only to fulfil the divine counsels concerning her. When those counsels shall be fulfilled, in the salvation of all believers, the world, which subsists only for their sake, will be at an end.

"3. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God."

As the prophet began, in a rapture, to speak of the holy city, so now, in fresh transport, he changes the person, and suddenly addresses himself to it. The old Jerusalem was "the city of God, and

glorious things were therefore said of it" by the Spirit. Pleasant for situation, and magnificent in its buildings, it was the delight of nations, the joy of the whole earth; there was the royal residence of the king's of Judah; there was the temple, and the ark, and the glory, and the King of heaven dwelling in the midst of her; her streets were honoured with the footsteps of the Redeemer of men; there he preached and wrought his miracles, lived, died, and rose again; thither he sent down the Spirit, and there he first laid the foundations of his church. To know what "glorious things" are said of the NEW Jerusalem, the reader must peruse Isaiah lx. and Rev. xxi. xxii.

"4. I will make mention of Rahab, *or*, Egypt, and Babylon, to them that know me: Behold, Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia, *or*, Arabia, this *man* was born there. 5. And of Sion it shall be said, 'This and that man was born in her; and the Highest himself shall establish her.'"

The accession of the nations to the church is generally supposed to be here predicted. God declares by his prophets, "I will make mention of," or "cause to be remembered, Egypt and Babylon," the old enemies of Israel, "to" or "among them that know me," that is, in the number of my worshippers; "Behold" also "Philistia, and Tyre, with Arabia;" these are become mine; "this," or each of these, "is born there," *i. e.* in the city of God; they are become children of God, and citizens of Sion; so that "of Sion," or the church," it shall be said, This and that man," *Heb.* "a man and a

man,"* *i. e.* great numbers of men in succession, "are born in her;" alluding to the multitudes of converts under the Gospel, the sons of that Jerusalem, "which is the mother of us all;" Gal. iv. 26. "and the Highest himself shall establish her;" as he saith, "Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt. xvi. 18.

"6. The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, *that this man* was born there."

In the book of life, that register of heaven, kept by God himself, our names are entered, not as born of flesh and blood by the will of man, but as born of water and the Spirit by the will of God; of each person it is written, "that he was born there," in the church and city of God. That is the only birth which we ought to value ourselves upon, because that alone gives us our title to "the inheritance of the saints in light. In Jesus Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian," noble nor ignoble, "bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all." Col. iii. 11.†

* Dr. Durell renders *איש ואיש*, "The man, even the man," that is, "The man of men;" or, "The greatest of all men." The reduplication, he thinks, according to the oriental phraseology, must mean the superlative, or highest degree. He adds, According to this interpretation, every one will see who this eminent personage was to be, from whose birth Zion (used by a synecdoche for Judea) was to acquire so much glory. The latter hemistic—"And the Highest himself shall establish her"—seems to me to have reference, not to God the Father, but to his Son; it appearing to be exegetical of the preceding one, and to describe his divine, as the other does his human nature. Critical Remarks, p. 167.

† Dr. Durell thinks this verse relates to the pedigree of our

“ 7. As well the singers as the players on instruments *shall be there* ; all my springs *are in thee.*”

The literal version of the words, as Dr. Chandler observes, seems to be, “ *Cantantes erunt, sicut choream ducentes: omnes fontes mei in te.* They shall sing like those that lead up the dance,” *i. e.* most joyfully; singing and dancing frequently accompanying one another. And the burden of the song thus joyfully sung in praise of Sion, was to be this, “ All my springs,” or fountains, “are in thee.” And if such be indeed the incomparable excellence of the church, and such the benefits of her communion, as they have been set forth in the foregoing verses, what anthem better deserves to be performed by all her choirs? In thee, O Sion, is the fountain of salvation, and from thee are derived all those springs of grace, which flow, by the divine appointment, while the world lasts, for the purification and refreshment of mankind upon earth.

Lord, recorded among the Jews, and given us by the evangelists, “ The Lord will have this recorded, in registering the people, that HE,” the *איש ראש* mentioned above, “ was born there.”

PSALM LXXXVIII.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm, as Mr. Mudge observes, may well be said to be composed, according to its title, לַעֲכָרָה, to create dejection, to raise a pensive gloom or melancholy in the mind; the whole subject of it being quite throughout heavy, and full of the most dismal complaints. The nature and degree of the sufferings related in it; the strength of the expressions used to describe them; the consent of ancient expositors; the appointment of the Psalm by the church to be read on Good Friday; all these circumstances concur in directing an application of the whole to our blessed Lord. His unexampled sorrows, both in body and soul; his desertion in the day of trouble; his bitter passion, and approaching death; with his frequent and fervent prayers for the accomplishment of the promises, for the salvation of the church through him, and for the manifestation of God's glory; these are the particulars treated of in this instructive and most affecting composition.*

“ 1. O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day *and* night before thee: 2. Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry.”

We hear in these words the voice of our suffering Redeemer. As man, he addresseth himself to his Father, “ the LORD God of his salvation,” from whom he expected, according to the promises, a joyful and triumphant resurrection: he pleadeth the

* Cum Psalmis xxii. et lxix. ad omnia convenit Psalmus lxxxviii. quod argumento est, eum eodem modo a nobis esse explicandum. Continet igitur pariter orationem Christi ad Patrem e cruce fusam. Auctor hujus Centici non alium in finem illi titulum dedit מְשַׁכֵּל, “erudientis,” quam ut Ecclesia posteriorum temporum ex eo disceret ultima hæc Messiae fata. Vitringa, Observat. Sac. lib. ii. cap. 9.

fervency and importunity of his prayers, offered up continually, "day and night," during the time of his humiliation and sufferings; and he entreateth to be heard in these his supplications for his body mystical, as well as his body natural; for himself, and for us all.

"3. For my soul is full of troubles; and my life draweth nigh unto the grave."

Is not this exactly parallel to what he said in the garden, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death? Full," indeed, "of troubles" was thy "soul," O blessed Jesus, in that dreadful hour, when, under the united weight of our sins and sorrows, thou wert sinking into "the grave," in order to raise us out of it. Let us judge of thy love by thy sufferings, and of both by the impossibility of our fully comprehending either.

"4. I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man *that hath* no strength."

Next to the troubles of Christ's soul, are mentioned the disgrace and ignominy to which he submitted. He who was the fountain of immortality, he from whom no one could take his life, who could in a moment have commanded twelve legions of angels to his aid, or have caused heaven and earth, at a word speaking, to fly away before him, he was "counted with them that go down into the pit;" he died, to all appearance, like the rest of mankind; nay, he was forcibly put to death, as a malefactor; and seemed, in the hands of his executioners, "as a man that had no strength," no power or might, to

help and to save himself. "His strength went from him; he became weak, and like another man." The people shook their heads at him, saying, "He saved others, himself he cannot save."

"5. Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more; and they are cut off from thy hand."

"Free among the dead;" that is, set at liberty, or dismissed from the world, and separated from all communication with its affairs, as dead bodies are, "like" other "corpses that lie in the grave, "whom thou rememberest no more," that is, as living objects of providence upon earth: in this sense, "they are cut off from God's hand," which held and supported them in life. And in no other sense can these expressions be understood; since to imagine that the Psalmist, who so often speaks in plain terms of the resurrection, should here, when personating Messiah, deny that doctrine, would be a conceit equally absurd, and impious.

"6. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. 7. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted *me* with all thy waves."

The sufferings of Jesus are represented by his being plunged into a dark and horrible abyss, with the indignation of God, due to our sins, resting upon him, and all the waves of affliction rolling over him. The same image is used in Psalm lxi. and many other places.

"8. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far

from me: thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I *am* shut up, and I cannot come forth."

At the apprehension of Christ, "All his disciples forsook him and fled:" Matt. xxvi. 56. Peter denied and abjured his Master, as if his acquaintance had been a disgrace, and "an abomination:" at the crucifixion, it is observed by St. Luke, that "all his acquaintance stood afar off, beholding these things;" xxiii. 49. beholding the innocent victim environed by his enemies, and at length "shut up" in the sepulchre. The day must come, when each person, who reads this, shall be forsaken by the whole world; when relations, friends, and acquaintances, shall retire, unable to afford him any help and assistance; when he must die, and be confined in the prison of the grave, no more to "come forth," until that great Easter of the world, the general resurrection. In the solitary and awful hour of our departure hence, let us remember to think on the desertion, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of our Redeemer.

"9. Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee."

This verse contains a reiteration of the complaint and prayer made at the beginning of the Psalm. These are some of the "strong cryings with tears," which, during the course of his intercessions for us upon earth, the Son of God poured forth "in the days of his flesh." Heb. v. 7.

"10. Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? shall the dead rise *and* praise thee? 11. Shall thy lov-

ing kindness be declared in the grave, *or* thy faithfulness in destruction? 12. Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?"

It hath been sometimes thought, that these verses imply a denial, or at least a doubt, of the resurrection from the dead; whereas they contain, in reality, the most powerful plea that Christ himself, in his prayers to the Father, could urge for it; namely, that, otherwise, man would be deprived of his salvation, and God of the glory thence accruing. "Wilt thou show wonders to the dead," while they continue in that state; or if thou shouldst, will they be sensible of those wonders, and make thee due returns of thankfulness? "Shall the dead rise up" in the congregation, "and praise thee?" Must they not live again to do that? "Shall thy loving kindness" to the sons of Adam, in me their Redeemer, "be declared," shall the Gospel be preached, "in the grave?" "or thy faithfulness," in accomplishing the promises concerning this loving kindness, shall it be manifested "in that destruction" wrought by death upon the bodies of men? "Shall thy wonders," the wonders of light, and life, and salvation, "be known in the dark" tomb? "and the righteousness," which characterizes all thy dispensations, shall it be remembered and proclaimed "in the land" of silence and "forgetfulness?" A Christian, upon the bed of sickness, may undoubtedly plead with God, in this manner, for a longer continuance of life, to glorify him here upon earth. But every respite of that kind can be only temporary. All men, sooner or

later, must die; and then they can never more experience the mercies, or sing the praises of God, unless they rise again. So that if the argument hold in one case, it certainly holdeth still stronger in the other.

“ 13. But unto thee have I cried, O LORD, and in the morning shall my prayer prevent me. 14. LORD, why castest thou off my soul? *why* hidest thou thy face from me?

Since therefore the wonders, the loving kindness, the faithfulness, and the righteousness of God, cannot be manifested by man's redemption, if Messiah be left under the dominion of death, he redoubles his prayers for the promised deliverance; and speaks of his redemption in the hour of sorrow, as in Psalm xxii. 1. “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” &c.

“ 15. I *am* afflicted and ready to die from *my* youth up: *while* I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted; *Heb.* I am distressed, not knowing which way to turn myself.* 16. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me, thy terrors have cut me off. 17. They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together.”

We are not to imagine that the holy Jesus suffered for us only at Gethsemane, and on mount Calvary. His whole life was one continued passion;

* Dominus ipse de se, Psal. lxxxviii. 16. “ Fero terrores tuos; animi linquor.” Loquitur de extremis suis angoribus et doloribus. Vitringa in Jesai. ii. 667.

a scene of labour and sorrow, of contradiction and persecution; "he was afflicted," as never man was, "from his youth up," from the hour of his birth, when, thrust out from the society of men, he made his bed in the stable at Bethlehem; he was "ready to die," a victim destined and prepared for that death which, by anticipation, he tasted of through life; he saw the flaming sword of God's "fierce wrath" waiting to "cut him off" from the land of the living; the "terrors" of the Almighty set themselves in array against him, threatening, like the mountainous waves of a tempestuous sea, to overwhelm his amazed soul. Let not the church be offended or despond, but rather let her rejoice in her sufferings, by which, through every period of her existence, from youth to age, she "filleth up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ," who suffers and will be glorified IN his people, as he hath already suffered and been glorified FOR them. See Col. i. 24.

"18. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, *and* mine acquaintance into darkness."

It is mentioned again, as a most affecting circumstance of Christ's passion, that he was entirely forsaken, and left all alone, in that dreadful day. The bitter cup was presented filled to the brim, and he drank it off to the dregs. No man could share in those sufferings by which all other men were to be redeemed. His "lovers and friends," his disciples and acquaintance, "were put far from him;" they all "forsook him, and fled," to hide themselves from the fury of the Jews, "in darkness," in dark,

that is, secret places. Thus it is written in the Psalms, and thus in the Gospels it is recorded to have happened. Oftentimes, O blessed Jesus, do we forsake thee; but do not thou forsake us, or take thy Holy Spirit from us.

PSALM LXXXIX.

Seventeenth Day.—Evening Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm is appointed by the church to be read on Christmas-day. It celebrates, ver. 1—4. the mercies of God in Christ, promised to David; 5—13. the almighty power of Jehovah, manifested in his works and dispensations; 14. his justice, mercy, and truth; 15—18. the happiness and security of his people; 19—37. his covenant made with David as the representative of Messiah, who should come of his seed; 38—45. the church lamenteth her distressful state, at the time when this Psalm was penned;* 46—51. she prayeth for the accomplishment of the promise; and, in the mean time, 52. blesseth Jehovah.

“1. I WILL sing of the mercies of the LORD forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.”

The “mercies of Jehovah” have ever employed the voices of believers to celebrate them. These mercies were promises to the human race, in their great representative and surety, before the world be-

* Sedeciâ capto, domo David e solio deturbatâ, promissiones Dei irritas videri propheta queritur, necdum adesse Christum. Bossuet. Dr. Kennicott imagines it to have been composed by Isaiah, as a solemn and public address to God, at the time when Rezin and Pekah were advancing against Jerusalem.

gan; 2 Tim. i. 9. Tit. i. 2. they were prefigured by ancient dispensations; and, in part fulfilled, at the incarnation of Christ. The "faithfulness" of God, in so fulfilling them, is now "made known," by the holy services of the Christian church, "to all generations."

"2. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever; thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens."

Whatever be at any time the state of the church on earth, she knoweth that the foundation of God standeth sure; that the sacred edifice, raised thereon, will be incorruptible and eternal as "heaven" itself, where only mercy and truth are to have their perfect work, in their everlasting felicity of the redeemed. Of this felicity, which is to be the consummation of God's promises, and our hopes, we behold some faint resemblance, as often as we view the stability, the beauty, and the glory of the visible material "heavens."

"3. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant: 4. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations."

The two former verses set forth a profession of faith in God's mercy; these two assign the ground of such faith; namely, the covenant which God is here introduced as declaring that he had made with David, and which he did make with him by the prophet Nathan: 2 Sam. vii. 12. &c. The covenant relates to David's "seed," and to the "es-

tablishment of his throne" in that seed: literally, in Solomon for a time; spiritually, in Christ for ever: "When thy days shall be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son." These last words are cited by the apostle, Heb. i. 5. as spoken of Christ, to evince his superiority over the angels. Yet, that the whole passage does, in the letter, relate to Solomon, can admit of no doubt, he being the "seed" and immediate successor of David, and the person appointed to "build an house for God's name." Here then we have an incontestable proof, that the covenant with David had Messiah for its object; that Solomon was a figure of him; and that the Scripture hath sometimes a double sense.* It is moreover to be observed, that the covenants made with Abraham, David, &c. all had their original and foundation in the covenant made with MESSIAH, who was the true Father of the faithful, the Beloved and Chosen of God; the great Prophet, Priest, and King: the only person qualified to be a Sponsor, and to engage in a covenant with the Father for mankind. His sufferings were the price of our redemption: and because he suffered in the flesh, as "the Son of David," therefore is he "established for ever, and his throne built up to all generations." Remarkable

* "Disposui testamentum:" percussi, foedus cum electo meo: id est, Davide et Christo. Bossuet.

are the words of the angel to Mary: "The Lord God shall give unto him the "throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Luke i. 32.

"5. And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD; thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints: *or*, the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD; and the saints thy faithfulness in the congregation."

Did not "the heavens praise the wonders of Jehovah," when a choir of angels descended from above, to sing an anthem at the birth of Christ? And how must the celestial courts have resounded with the hallelujahs of those blessed spirits, when they again received their King, returning in triumph from the conquest of his enemies? Nor do "the saints" omit to celebrate God's "faithfulness in the congregation" upon earth, while "with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, they laud and magnify his glorious name, evermore praising him, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord most high."

"6. For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD! *who* among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? 7. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints; and to be had in reverence of all *them that are* about him. 8. O LORD God of hosts, who *is* a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? *or*, and thy faithfulness is round about thee."

These verses proclaim that right and title which Jehovah hath to the praises of all his creatures in "heaven and earth." No one of them, however excellent and glorious, however deified and adored by fond and foolish man, can enter the lists, and contest the superiority with its Maker. High over all is the throne of God: before him "angels" veil their faces, "saints" prostrate themselves with lowest reverence, and created nature trembles at his word: his "power" is almighty, and derived from none; and with "truth" he is on all sides invested as with a garment: the former enables him, the latter (if we may so express it) binds him, to perform those gracious promises, which mercy prompted him to make, concerning our eternal redemption.

"9. Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise thou stillest them."

The extent of the ocean, the multitude of its waves, and their fury when excited by a storm, render it, in that state, the most tremendous object in nature; nor doth any thing, which man beholds, give him so just an idea of human impotence, and of that divine power which can excite and calm so boisterous an element at pleasure. God himself therefore frequently appeals to this instance of his omnipotence, see Job xxxviii. 11. Jer. v. 22. an attribute of which our Lord showed himself to have been possessed, when, being with his disciples in the ship, he arose and rebuked a tempestuous wind and a raging sea, and there was instantly a calm. In all our troubles and temptations, be thou, blessed Jesus, with us, and then they shall never finally overwhelm us.

“ 10. Thou hast broken Rahab, that is, *Egypt*, in pieces, as one that is slain: thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.”

The destruction of Pharaoh and the Egyptians is here mentioned as another instance of God's mighty power. And it is probable, that the foregoing verse was intended to allude more particularly to that miraculous exertion of God's sovereignty over the waters, the division of the Red Sea, which happened at the same time; as these two events are generally spoken of together. Thus Isaiah: “ Art thou not it that hath cut “ Rahab,” that is, Egypt, “ and wounded the dragon,” that is, Pharaoh? “ Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep, that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?” li. 9. The same power which effected all this, hath since, in Christ Jesus, overcome the world, destroyed the works of the devil, and ransomed mankind from the depths of the grave.

“ 11. The heavens *are* thine, the earth also *is* thine: *as for* the world, and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them. 12. The north and the south, thou hast created them; Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.”

The “ heavens,” and all the glorious bodies there ranged in beautiful order; the “ earth,” with its rich furniture, and the unnumbered tribes of its inhabitants, through its whole extent, from “ north to south,” and from east to west; all these are so many evidences of that wisdom and power which at

the beginning contrived and formed them; all, in their respective ways, declare the glory, and speak the praises of their great Creator; but chiefly the holy land, and the fruitful hills which adorned it. “Tabor” in one part, and “Hermon” in another, formerly seemed, as it were, to “rejoice” and sing, for the abundant favours showered down upon them by the God of Israel, who hath since caused all nations no less to exult and triumph in his saving NAME.

“13. Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, *and* high is thy right hand.”

The Psalmist, having produced and meditated on some eminent instances of divine power, draws this general conclusion from the premises. Towards the Christian church “the arm of Jehovah” hath been revealed in a still more extraordinary manner. She reflecteth on the wonders wrought by Jesus; a conquest over more formidable enemies than Pharaoh and his Egyptians; a redemption from more cruel bondage; salvation from sin and death; a new creation, new heavens, and new earth, a new Jerusalem, and a spiritual Sion. With additional conviction may she therefore exclaim, “Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand!”

“14. Justice and judgment *are* the habitation, *Heb.* the establishment of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.”

Although the power of God be infinite, yet is it never exerted, but under the direction of his other

attributes. When he goeth, as a judge, to his tribunal, "mercy and truth go before his face;" they are represented as preceding him, to give notice of his advent, and to prepare his way. "All the ways," or dispensations "of the Lord," as it is elsewhere observed, "are mercy and truth;" Ps. xxv. 10. they are the substance of all his revelations, which either promise salvation, or relate the performance of such promises. By these is man warned and prepared for "judgment;" which is to be the last and finishing scene. And when the great Judge of all the earth shall from his throne pronounce the irreversible sentence, not a creature then present shall be able to accuse that sentence of injustice. After this model should the thrones of princes, and the tribunals of earthly magistrates, be constituted in "justice and judgment," adorned with "mercy and truth."

"15. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance."

Next to the praises of Jehovah, is declared the happiness of those who have him for their God; who "know the joyful sound, or sound of the trumpet," by which the festivals of the Jewish church were proclaimed, and the people were called together to the offices of devotion; who enjoy the "light" of truth, and through grace are enabled to "walk" therein. These blessings are now become our own: the evangelical trumpet hath sounded through the once heathen world; the Sun of Righteousness hath risen upon all nations. Let us attend to the

“joyful sound;” let us “walk” in the glorious “light.”

“16. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in righteousness shall they be exalted. 17. For thou *art* the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted. 18. For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our King.”

It is the duty of Christians, as it was that of Israelites, to ascribe all their strength, their success, and their glory, whether in matters temporal or spiritual, to Jehovah alone. Having heard the sound, and experienced the illuminating and reviving influences of the Gospel, in the name and in the salvation of God we rejoice all the day, and in his righteousness only we trust to be exalted to heaven: to him we attribute the glory of that strength, with which, in time of temptation, we may find ourselves happily endued; and in his favour, or grace, our horn, or the efforts of our power, shall be exalted, and crowned with victory; our defence in all dangers is from Jehovah, who was ever the shield of his ancient people; and the Holy One of Israel is our Redeemer, and our King.

“19. Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid, *or*, placed, help upon, *or*, in *one that* is mighty; I have exalted *one* chosen out of the people.”

The covenant made with David was mentioned in general terms above, at verses 4, 5. But a more particular account is now given of God's dispensa-

tions relative to the son of Jesse, and his posterity. We are presented with the substance of the revelation made upon this subject, "in vision," to one of the prophets, perhaps Samuel, or Nathan, here styled an "holy one," or religious person, one favoured and accepted by God, who is introduced as manifesting to this his prophet the divine counsels concerning David: "I have placed help upon, or in one, who shall become an eminent and mighty Saviour of Israel; from among all the people I have chosen, and determined to exalt him, for that purpose, to the throne." Thus was Messiah foretold, in prophetic visions and revelations, as the person designed to be the mighty Redeemer of his church; thus, in the fulness of time, was he chosen from among all the children of men, and exalted, through sufferings, to an eternal throne.

"20. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him. 21. With whom my hand shall be established; mine arm also shall strengthen him."

David was the servant of God; he was, by the prophet Samuel, anointed with oil; he was strengthened and established in his kingdom, by the hand and arm of Jehovah. But never let Christians fail, in this eminently figurative character, to contemplate that true DAVID, (for so HE is called, Ezek. xxxiv. 23. xxxvii. 25.) the BELOVED Son of God; "the servant and elect of Jehovah, in whom his soul delighted, and on whom he put his Spirit;" Isa. xlii. 1. whom he anointed with his holy oil, with the oil of gladness, with the Holy Ghost and with power;"

Ps. xlv. 7. Acts x. 38. whom he strengthened, and established in his spiritual kingdom, with his hand and arm, and the might of his omnipotence.

“ 22. The enemy shall not exact upon, *or*, deceive, him : nor the son of wickedness afflict, *or*, subdue, him. 23. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. 24. But my faithfulness and my mercy *shall be* with him : and in my name shall his horn be exalted.”

These promises were fulfilled to David, when God delivered him out of the hand of Saul, and of all his other adversaries. See 2 Sam. xxii. 1. And in what a full, perfect, and divine sense, were they verified to Christ ! That subtle enemy, “ which deceiveth the whole world,” was not able to deceive him ; neither the sons nor the father of wickedness could overthrow and subdue him : all opposition fell before him, and they who hated him suffered unparalleled desolation ; the promised faithfulness and mercy of Jehovah were ever with him, and his kingdom was exalted with glory and honour.

“ 25. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.”

The dominions of David and his son Solomon extended from the Mediterranean “ sea” to the “ rivers” Euphrates, &c.—the empire of Christ is universal over Jews and Gentiles, throughout all the earth. See Ps. lxxii. 8. &c.

“ 26. He shall cry unto me, Thou *art* my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.

27. Also I will make *my* first-born higher than the kings of the earth."

All this, if in some respects true of David, is much more emphatically so of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Son of God" is one of his distinguished titles; of "the Father" he continually spoke, and to the Father he addressed his prayers and cries, in the days of his flesh; as man he was raised and exalted by the power and glory of the Divinity; he was "the first-born of every creature, the first begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." Col. i. 15. Rev. i. 5. Make us, blessed Lord, the sons of God, and teach us to cry, Abba, Father; give us victory and dominion over sin and death, that we may live and reign with thee for ever.

" 28. My mercy will I keep for, *or*, to, him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. 29. His seed also will I make *to endure* for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven."

God kept his mercy and covenant with David, by preserving the line of his posterity, until his great antitype, Messiah, the subject of all the promises, came, by whom the kingdom was established for ever, being changed into a spiritual one, which is to be transferred from earth to heaven, and rendered coeval with those eternal mansions of the blessed.

" 30. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; 31. If they break, *or* profane, my statutes, and keep not my commandments; 32. Then will I visit their transgression with the rod,

and their iniquity with stripes. 33. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fall. 34. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."

The posterity of David were to enjoy God's favour, or be deprived of it, as they proved obedient or disobedient to his "law;" as they executed or perverted its civil "judgment;" as they observed or neglected its ceremonial "statutes," or religious institutions; as they kept or broke its "commandments," or moral precepts. When they became rebellious, idolatrous, and profligate, the rod was lifted up, and due chastisement inflicted, sometimes by the immediate hand of Heaven, sometimes by the instrumentality of their heathen adversaries; famine and pestilence, war and captivity, were at different times employed to reclaim backsliding Israel. But still, the "covenant" of God in Christ stood sure; the Jewish nation was preserved, through all changes and revolutions, "until the Seed came to whom the promise was made;" nor was Jerusalem destroyed, before the new and spiritual kingdom of Messiah was set up in the earth. Christian communities, and the individuals that compose them, are in like manner corrected and punished for their offences. "Nevertheless, God's loving kindness will he not utterly take from us, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. His covenant will he not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips." So—"I am with you always," says the Redeemer, "even to the end of the world; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against

my church:" Matt. xxviii. 20. xvi. 18. Nor shall the world be destroyed, until Christ come again, and his glorious kingdom be ready to appear.

"35. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. 36. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. 37. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and *as* a faithful witness in heaven."

The promise, covenant, and oath of God, which he declareth shall never fail, are here repeated. They relate to Christ, that "Seed," or "Son of David," who "endureth for ever." His throne is resplendent as the "sun," and shall continue, after that luminary is extinguished: his church is permanent as the "moon," though, like her, subject to vicissitudes, and liable, for a time, to be obscured by eclipses, during her present state upon earth. And while the rainbow shall be seen in the clouds, man has "a faithful witness in heaven" of the immutable truth of God's word, and the infallible accomplishment of what he promises. "Look upon the rainbow," saith the wise son of Sirach, "and praise him who made it: very beautiful it is in the brightness thereof: it compasseth the heaven about with a glorious circle, and the hands of the most High have bended it:" Eccles. xliii. 11. But let us not forget likewise, when we look upon the rainbow, to praise him who made it to be a sign and sacred symbol of mercy; in which capacity we behold it, to our great and endless comfort, compassing the throne of Christ with a gracious, as well as glorious, circle. "There was a RAINBOW round about the throne." Rev. iv. 3. Ezek. i. 26.

“ 38. But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed. 39. Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant; thou hast profaned his crown, *by casting it to the ground.*”

In the former part of our Psalm, we have seen what the divine promises were, which had been made to the house of David. By the latter part, upon which we are entering, it appears, that the Psalm was written at a time, when the church of Israel was in such a manner oppressed and reduced by her enemies, that her members began almost to despair of those promises receiving their accomplishment. God seemed to have “cast off” and “abhorred” his “anointed” and “servant,” that is, David, or rather the prince of his family, who was upon the throne when this captivity and desolation happened; the “covenant” seemed to be overturned and “made void,” when the “crown” of Israel was defiled in the dust.

“ 40. Thou hast broken down all his hedges, thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin. 41. All that pass by the way spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbours. 42. Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries: thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice. 43. Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle. 44. Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground. 45. The days of his youth hast thou shortened; thou hast covered him with shame.”

The manifold calamities of Sion are in these verses

enumerated: The demolition of fences and fortifications; the cruel ravages consequent thereupon; the shame of defeats; the reproaches and insults of victorious adversaries; the dishonours of violent and untimely death. In days like these here described, when the church and the king are permitted to fall into the hands of those who hate them, and to drink thus deeply of the cup of affliction, distrust and despondency are apt to seize upon the minds of men. Nay, when the faithful few beheld the true "Son of David," and "Anointed" of Jehovah, in the day of his sufferings; when they saw him, without help or defence, "spoiled and reproached by his neighbours;" when they viewed "the right hand of his adversaries set up," and all his "enemies rejoicing" over him; his "glory made to cease," and his "crown profaned in the dust; the days of his youth shortened," and himself delivered over to a "shameful" as well as painful death; they then began to think "the covenant made void," and the promises at an end. "We trusted," said they, "that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel!" Luke xxiv. 21. And although Christ be long since risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, yet the prevalence of iniquity, and the oppression of the church, have been, and in the last days will be such, as to put the faith and hope of his servants to a sore trial, while they wait for his second, as the ancient Jews did for his first advent.

"46. How long, LORD? Wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire? 47. Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast

thou made all men in vain? Or, as *Ainsworth translates the verse*, Remember how transitory I am, unto what vanity thou hast created all the sons of Adam. 48. What man *is he that* liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul, *or*, animal frame, from the hand of the grave? 49. LORD, where *are* thy former loving kindnesses, *which* thou swarest unto David in thy truth?"

This is the humble and dutiful expostulation of the church with God in all her distresses upon the earth. By asking, "How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever?" she tacitly pleadeth his promise not to be so: she urgeth the shortness of man's life here below, the universality of the fatal sentence, the impossibility of avoiding death, and, if nothing farther was to happen, the frustration of the divine counsels concerning man. From thence she entreateth God to remember the "loving kindnesses" once promised by him with an oath to David, as related in the former part of the Psalm. These "loving kindnesses" are called, in Isaiah, lv. 3. "the sure mercies of David;" which "sure mercies of David" are affirmed by St. Paul, Acts xiii. 34. to have been then confirmed on Israel, when, in the person of Jesus, God raised our nature from the grave. To a resurrection, therefore, believers have ever aspired; thither have they directed their wishes, and on that event have they fixed their hopes, as the end of temporal sorrows, and the beginning of eternal joys.

"50. Remember, LORD, the reproach of thy servants; *how* I do bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the mighty people; 51. Wherewith thine ene-

mies have reproached, O LORD; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed."

The last argument urged by the church, in her expostulation with God for a speedy redemption, is, the continual reproach to which she was subject, on account of the promise being delayed. The "mighty people," or Heathen nations, who held her in captivity, and were witnesses of her wretched and forlorn estate, ridiculed her pretensions to perpetuity of empire in the house of David; they blasphemed the God, who was said to have made such promises; and "reproached the footsteps," or mocked at the tardy advent of his Messiah,* who was to establish in Israel his everlasting throne. All these cruel taunts and insults she was obliged to "bear in her bosom," and there to suppress them in silence, having nothing to answer in the day of her calamity and seeming destitution. St. Peter gives us a like account of the state of the Christian church in the latter days; he exhorts us to be "mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour, because there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" 2 Pet. iii. 4.

* "Exprobraverunt vestigia Christi tui;" tarditatem vestigiorum Christi tui. Chald. Irridebant nos quod non adveniret expectatus ille Liberatores, sive Cyrus, sive potius Christus de semine Davidis, regno ejus instaurando, et in æternum firmando. Bossuet.

“ 52. Blessed *be* the LORD for evermore. Amen and Amen.”

But whatever be at any time our distress, either as a community or as individuals, still are we to believe, still to hope, still to bless and praise Jehovah, whose word is true, whose works are faithful, whose chastisements are mercies, and all whose promises are, in Christ Jesus, yea, and amen, for evermore.

PSALM XC.

Eighteenth Day.—Morning Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm is called, in its title, “A prayer of Moses, the man of God.” By him it is imagined to have been composed when God shortened the days of the murmuring Israelites in the wilderness. See Numb. xiv. It is, however, a Psalm of general use, and is made, by the church, a part of her funeral service. It containeth, 1, 2. an address to the eternal and unchangeable God, the Saviour and Preserver of his people; 3—10. a most affecting description of man’s mortal and transitory state on earth since the fall; 11. a complaint, that few meditate in such a manner upon death, as to prepare themselves for it; 12. a prayer for grace so to do; 13—17. and for the mercies of redemption.

“ 1. LORD, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. 2. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou *art* God.”

The Psalmist, about to describe man’s fleeting and transitory state, first directed us to contemplate

the unchangeable nature and attributes of God, who hath always been a “dwelling-place,” or place of defence and refuge, affording protection and comfort to his people in the world, as he promised to be before the world began, and will, in a more glorious manner, continue to be after its dissolution. See, for a parallel, Ps. cii. 25. &c. with St. Paul’s application, Heb. i. 10.

“3. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.”

Death was the penalty inflicted on man for sin. The latter part of the verse alludes to the fatal sentence, Gen. iii. 19. “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” How apt are we to forget both our original and our end!

“4. For a thousand years in thy sight *are but* as yesterday when it is past, and *as* a watch in the night.”

The connection between the verse preceding and the verse now before us, seems to be this: God sentenced man to death. It is true, the execution of the sentence was at first deferred, and the term of human life suffered to extend to near a thousand years. But what was even that, what is any period of time, or time itself, if compared with the duration of the Eternal? All time is equal, when it is past; a thousand years, when gone, are forgotten as yesterday; and the longest life of man, to a person who looks back upon it, may appear only as three hours, or one quarter of the night.

“ 5. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are *as* a sleep: in the morning *they are* like grass *which* groweth up; *or*, as grass *that* changeth. 6. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.”

The shortness of life, and the suddenness of our departure hence, are illustrated by three similitudes. The first is that of a “flood,” or torrent pouring unexpectedly and impetuously from the mountains, and sweeping all before it in an instant. The second is that of “sleep,” from which, when a man awaketh, he thinketh the time passed in it to have been nothing. In the third similitude, man is compared to the “grass” of the field. In the morning of youth fair and beautiful, he groweth up and flourisheth; in the evening of old age, (and how often before that evening!) he is cut down by the stroke of death; all his juices, to the circulation of which he stood indebted for life, health, and strength, are dried up; he withereth, and turneth again to his earth. “Surely all flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field!” Isa. xl. 6. Of this truth, the word of God, the voice of nature, and daily experience, join to assure us: yet who ordereth his life and conversation as if he believed it?

“ 7. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. 8. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee; our secret *sins* in the light of thy countenance.”

The generations of men are troubled and con-

sumed by divers diseases, and sundry kinds of death, through the displeasure of God; his displeasure is occasioned by their sins, all of which he seeth and punisheth. If Moses wrote this Psalm, the provocations and chastisements of Israel are here alluded to. But the case of the Israelites in the wilderness, is the case of Christians in the world; and the same thing is true both in them and in us.

“ 9. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath; we spend our years as a tale *that is told.*”

Life is compared to a “ tale ” that is told and forgotten, to a “ word ” which is but air, or breath, and vanisheth into nothing, as soon as spoken; or perhaps, as the original generally signifies, to a “ meditation, a thought,” which is of a nature still more fleeting and transient.

“ 10. The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten, and if by reason of strength, *they be* fourscore years, yet *is* their strength labour and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”

This again might be primarily spoken by Moses, concerning Israel. The generation of those who came out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upwards, fell within the space of forty years, in the wilderness; Numb. xiv. 29. and they who lived longest experienced only labour and sorrow, until they were cut off, like grass, and, by the breath of God's displeasure, blown away from the face of the earth. Like the Israelites, we have been brought out of Egypt, and sojourn in the wilderness; like them we murmur, and offend God our Saviour; like them

we fall and perish. To the age of seventy years, few of us can hope to attain; labour and sorrow are our portion in the world; we are mowed down, as this year's grass of the field; we fly away, and are no more seen in the land of the living.

“ 11. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, *so is thy wrath.*”

Houbigant renders the verse thus: “ *Quis novit vim iræ tuæ; et, prout terribilis es, furorem tuum?*” “ Who knoweth,” or considereth, “ the power of thine anger; and thy wrath, in proportion as thou art terrible?” that is, in other words, Notwithstanding all the manifestations of God's indignation against sin, which introduced death and every other calamity among men, who is there that knoweth, who that duly considereth and layeth to heart the almighty power of that indignation; who that is induced, by beholding the mortality of his neighbours, to prepare himself for his own departure hence? Such holy consideration is the gift of God, from whom the Psalmist, in the next verse, directeth us to request it.

“ 12. So teach *us* to number our days, that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom.”

He who “numbereth his days,” or taketh a right account of the shortness of this present life, compared with the unnumbered ages of that eternity which is future, will soon become a proficient in the school of true wisdom. He will learn to give the preference where it is due; to do good, and suffer evil, upon earth, expecting the reward of both in

heaven. Make us wise, blessed Lord, but wise unto salvation.

“13. Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning, *or*, be propitiated, towards, thy servants.”

During the reign of death over poor mankind, God is represented as absent; he is therefore by the faithful entreated to “return,” and to satisfy their longing desires after salvation; to hasten the day when Messiah should make a “propitiation” for sin, when he should redeem his servants from death, and ransom them from the power of the grave. The Christian, who knoweth that his Lord is risen indeed, looks forward to the resurrection of the just, when death shall be finally swallowed up in victory.

“14. O satisfy us early, *or*, in the morning, with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. 15. Make us glad according to the days *wherein* thou hast afflicted us, *and* the years *wherein* we have seen the evil.”

The church prayeth for the dawning of that glorious morning, when every cloud shall vanish at the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and night and darkness shall be no more. Then only shall we be “satisfied, *or* saturated, with the mercy” of Jehovah; then only shall we “rejoice and be glad all our days.” The time of our pilgrimage upon earth is a time of sorrow; we grieve for our departed friends; and our surviving friends must soon grieve for us; these are “the days wherein God afflicteth us, these the years wherein we see evil:” but he

will hereafter “make us glad according to them;” in proportion to our sufferings, if rightly we bear those sufferings, will be our reward; nay, “these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Then shall our joy be increased, and receive an additional relish from the remembrance of our former sorrow; then shall we bless the days and the years which exercised our faith, and perfected our patience; and then shall we bless God, who chastised us for a season, that he might save us for ever.

“16. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. 17. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us, yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.”

The redemption of man is that “work” of God whereby his “glory” is manifested to all generations, and which all generations do therefore long to behold accomplished. For this purpose the faithful beseech God to let his “beauty,” his splendour, the light of his countenance, his grace and favour, be upon them: to “establish the work of their hands,” to bless, prosper, and perfect them in their Christian course and warfare; until, through him, they shall be enabled to subdue sin, and triumph over death.

PSALM XCI.

ARGUMENT.—The prophet, 1—10. declareth the security of the righteous man under the care and protection of Heaven, in times of danger, when, 11, 12. a guard of angels is set about him. 13. His final victory over the enemies of his salvation is foretold; and, 14—16. God himself is introduced, promising him deliverance, exaltation, glory, and immortality. The Psalm is addressed, primarily, to Messiah. That it relateth to him, Jews and Christians are agreed; and the devil, Matt. iv. 6. cited two verses from it, as universally known and allowed to have been spoken of him.

“ 1. HE that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2. I will say of the Lord, *He is my refuge and my fortress: my God, in him will I trust.* 3. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, *and* from the noisome pestilence.”

In these verses, as they now stand, there is much obscurity and confusion. Bishop Lowth, in his xxvith Lecture, seemeth to have given their true construction: “ He who dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High; who abideth under the shadow of the Almighty; who saith of the Lord, *He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I will trust:*”—leaving the sentence thus imperfect, the Psalmist maketh a beautiful apostrophe to that person whom he has been describing—“ Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.” The description is

eminently applicable to the man Christ Jesus.* He is represented as dwelling, like the ark in the Holy of holies, under the immediate “shadow” and protection of the Almighty, who was his “refuge and fortress” against the open attacks of his enemies; his preserver from the “snares” of the devil, and from the universal contagion of sin, that spiritual “pestilence.” In all dangers, whether spiritual or corporeal, the members of Christ’s mystical body may reflect with comfort, that they are under the same Almighty Protector.

“4. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; his truth *shall be thy shield and buckler.*”

The security afforded by a superintending Providence, to those who trust therein, is here, with the utmost beauty and elegance, compared to that shelter, which the young of birds are always sure to find under the “wings” of their dam, when fear causeth them to fly thither for refuge: see Deut. xxxii. 11. Matt. xxiii. 37. The “truth” of God’s word, wherein he promiseth to be our defence, is, to a believer, his “shield and buckler,” in the day of battle and war.

“5. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day: *Nor* for

* Ode Davidica insignis xci. agit directe et primo loco de tegmine et defensione quam Deus Christo Jesu Doctori et apostolis ipsius præstaret. Vitrina, Comment. in Jesai. ii. 565.

the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness: *nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noon-day."

How much man standeth in need of the above-mentioned protection of heaven, appeareth from a survey of the dangers, to which he is continually exposed. Various are the terrors of the night; manifold the perils of the day; from diseases whose infection maketh its progress unobserved; from assaults, casualties, and accidents, which can neither be foreseen, nor guarded against. The soul hath likewise her enemies, ready to attack and surprise her at all hours. Avarice and ambition are abroad watching for her in the day; while concupiscence, like a pestilence, "walketh in darkness." In adversity she is disturbed by terrors; in prosperity, still more endangered by pleasures. But Jesus Christ has overcome the world, to prevent us from being overcome by it.

"7. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand: *but* it shall not come nigh thee."

This promise has oftentimes, in a wonderful manner, been verified to those faithful servants of God, whom the pestilence itself hath not deterred from doing the duties of their station. The bishop and some of the intendants of Marseilles, who continued to perform their respective offices, during the whole time of the plague there in 1720, are signal and well-known instances. Sin is a pestilence, the contagion of which no son of Adam ever escaped but the blessed Jesus. He stood alone untouched

by its venom; thousands and ten thousands, all the myriads of mankind, fell around him; “but it did not come nigh Him.” Heal us of this our distemper, O thou Physician of souls, and let it not prove our everlasting destruction; “stand,” like thy representative of old, “between the dead and the living, and let the plague be stayed.” Numb. xvi. 47, 48.

“8. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.”

The meaning is, that the righteous person all along spoken of, himself secure from the judgments of God, should in safety behold the destruction wrought by them upon impenitent and incorrigible sinners. This will be the case with the church, as well as her glorious Head, at the last day.

“9. Because thou hast made the LORD, *which* is my refuge, *even* the Most High, thy habitation; 10. There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.”

The sentiment in these verses is evidently the same with that in verses, 5, 6. namely, that God preserveth such as trust in him, after the pattern of the holy Jesus, from those evils, and from that perdition, which are reserved for the ungodly. Dr. Durell translates the 9th verse, in the way of apostrophe, literally thus—“Surely, thou, O Lord, art my refuge; O Most High, thou hast fixed thine habitation;” that is, in Sion, to be the protector of his servant.

“ 11. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. 12. They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.”

This passage was cited by the devil, who tempted our Lord to cast himself from a pinnacle of the temple, upon presumption of the promise here made, that angels should guard and support him in all dangers. But Christ, in his answer, at once detecteth and exposeth the sophistry of the grand deceiver, by showing, that the promise belonged only to those who fell unavoidably into danger in the course of duty; such might hope for the help and protection of heaven; but that he who should wantonly and absurdly throw himself into peril, merely to try whether Providence would bring him out of it, must expect to perish for his pains. “ Jesus saith unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not TEMPT the Lord thy God.” Matt. iv. 7.

“ 13. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under thy feet.”

The fury and the venom of our spiritual enemies are often in Scripture portrayed by the natural qualities of “ lions and serpents.” Messiah’s complete victory over those enemies seemeth here to be predicted. Through grace he maketh us more than conquerors in our conflicts with the same adversaries. “ The God of peace,” saith St. Paul, “ shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly:” Rom. xvi. 20. And it is observable that, when the seventy disciples

return to Christ with joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name;" he answers in the metaphorical language of our Psalm: "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on scorpions and serpents, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the SPIRITS are subject unto you," &c. Luke x. 17. Give us, O Lord, courage to resist the "lion's" rage, and wisdom to elude the wiles of the "serpent."

"14. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. 15. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I *will be* with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and honour, *or*, glorify him. 16. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation."

In the former part of our Psalm, the prophet had spoken in his own person; here God himself is plainly introduced as the speaker. And, O how sweet, how delightful and comfortable, are his words addressed eminently to his beloved Son Messiah; and in him to all of us, his adopted children, and the heirs of eternal life; to all who love God, and have "known his name!" To such are promised, an answer to their prayers; the presence of their heavenly Father with them; in the day of trouble, protection and deliverance; salvation, and honour, and glory, and immortality. All these promises have already been made good to our gracious Head and Representative. His prayers have been heard; his sufferings are over; he is risen and ascended;

and behold, he liveth and reigneth for evermore. Swift fly the intermediate years, and rise that long-expected morning, when He who is gone “to prepare a place for us, shall come again, and take us to himself, that where he is we may be also !”

PSALM XCII.

ARGUMENT.—The title of this Psalm is, “A Psalm, or Song, for the Sabbath Day.” It teacheth, 1—5. the duty, time, and manner, of giving thanks for the works and dispensations of God. Thoughtless men are admonished, 6. to reflect upon the final issue of all these works and dispensations; namely, 7—9. the utter perdition of the ungodly, and, 10—14. the exaltation of the church in Christ Jesus, 15. to the praise and glory of God most high.

“1. *It is a good thing* to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High: 2. To show forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night: 3. Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.”

“Thanksgiving” is the duty, and ought to be the delight, of a Christian. It is his duty, as being the least return he can make to his great Benefactor: it ought to be his delight, for it is that of angels, and will be that of every grateful heart, whether in heaven or on earth. The “mercy” of God in promising salvation, and his “faithfulness” in accomplishing it, are inexhaustible subjects for “morning and evening” praises; every instrument should be strung, and every voice tuned, to celebrate

them, until day and night come to an end. But more especially should this be done on the “sabbath day;” which, when so employed, affords a lively resemblance of that eternal sabbath, to be hereafter kept by the redeemed in the kingdom of God.

“4. For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work : I will triumph in the works of thy hands.”

A prospect of creation in the vernal season, fallen as it is, inspires the mind with a joy which no words can express. But how doth the regenerate soul exult and triumph, at beholding that “work” of God’s “hand,” whereby he hath created all things anew in Christ Jesus! If we can be pleased with such a world as this, where sin and death have fixed their habitation; shall we not much rather admire those other heavens, and that other earth, wherein dwell righteousness and life? What are we to think of the palace, since even the prison is not without its charms!

“5. O LORD, how great are thy works! *and* thy thoughts are very deep. 6. A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.”

Glorious are the works, profound the counsels, marvellous the dispensations of God, in nature, in providence, in grace. But all are lost to the man void of spiritual discernment; who, like his fellow “brutes,” is bowed down to earth, and knoweth no pleasures but those of sense. Here he hath chosen his paradise, and set up his tabernacle; not considering that his tabernacle must shortly be taken down, and he must remove hence for ever.

“7. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; *it is* that they shall be destroyed for ever. 8. But thou, LORD, *art most* high for evermore.”

It is not improbable, that these verses should be connected with that preceding, thus—“A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this;” namely, that “When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever;” they are only nourishing themselves like senseless cattle in plentiful pastures, for the approaching day of slaughter. He who is ignorant of the final issue of things, who attendeth not to his eternal interest, he is, in Scripture language, “the brutish man,” and the “fool” who knoweth not the works, neither understandeth the designs of heaven. When the “grass” hath attained to its most flourishing estate, and all the flowers of the field are in perfect beauty, then the mower entereth with his scythe. What a beautiful and instructive emblem is here held forth to us! what a forcible admonition to trust only in him, who, without “variableness or shadow of turning,” is “most high for evermore!”

“9. For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, lo, thine enemies shall perish: all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. 10. But my horn shalt thou exalt like *the horn of* an unicorn: I shall be, *or*, I am, anointed with fresh oil.”

The “workers of iniquity” are the enemies of “Jehovah,” and will be “scattered” by the breath of his displeasure, as grass, after it is cut down, dried

up, and withered, is driven away by the whirlwinds of heaven. "But my horn," saith the Psalmist (it is likely in the person of Messiah), "my horn," that is, the strength and power of my kingdom, "shalt thou exalt like the horn of the unicorn*," like the power of the strongest creatures, to which that of states and empires is often compared; "I shall be," or, "I am, anointed with fresh oil;" I am appointed and consecrated king by the holy unction. Christians have "an unction from the Holy One," by which they are enabled to subdue their spiritual enemies; they reign over their passions and affections; they are exalted in the Redeemer: they are "made unto their God kings and priests." 1 John ii. 20. Rev. v. 10.

"11. Mine eye also shall see *my desire* on mine enemies: *and* mine ears shall hear *my desire* of the wicked that rise up against me."

The words, "my desire," are twice inserted by our translators. But would it not be better, if we were to supply the ellipsis in this manner, "Mine eye shall behold the fall of mine enemies; and mine ear shall hear the destruction of the wicked that rise up against me?" The sense of the verse is plain. It is intended to express an assurance of faith, an humble confidence in the promises of God, that our efforts shall at length be crowned with victory over every thing which resisteth and opposeth itself; and

* Heb. אָרִי, an eastern animal of the "stag" or "deer" kind, remarkable for its height, strength, and fierceness.

that the day is coming, when we shall view all the enemies of our salvation dead at our feet.

“ 12. The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.”

The momentary prosperity of the wicked was compared above to the transient verdure of “grass.” The durable felicity of the righteous is here likened to the lasting strength and beauty of “palms” and “cedars.” But chiefly is the comparison applicable to that Just One, the King of Righteousness, and Tree of Life; eminent and upright; ever verdant and fragrant; under the greatest pressure and weight of sufferings, still ascending toward heaven; affording both fruit and protection; incorruptible and immortal. “I sat down,” saith the church, “under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.” Song ii. 3.

“ 13. “Those that be planted in the house of the LORD, shall flourish in the courts of our God.”

Believers are styled by Isaiah, “Trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah:” chap. lxi. 3. They are planted by the living waters of comfort in the house of God; where, under the means of grace, they “flourish” in the hope of glory; “fenced and enclosed by the discipline and orders of the church, and by the consequent favour and protection of heaven; their verdure is conspicuous, and ever constant, whether in the summer of prosperity, or the winter of adversity; their actions and principles are ever upright and fair; yea, their very leaf exhales a delightful perfume, by a holy example and conversa-

tion; their affections and desires are ever ascending towards the noblest and most sublime objects, the things that are above, the glorious things of heaven*."

" 14. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age: they shall be fat and flourishing."

Happy the man whose goodness is always progressive, and whose virtues increase with his years; who loseth not, in multiplicity of worldly cares or pleasures, the holy fervours of his first love, but goeth on burning and shining more and more, to the end of his days. The church, like her representative Sarah, is now "well stricken in years;" but we hope that, like her, she will "still bring forth fruit in her old age;" we look for many more "children of promise" to be born unto Christ, born from among the Jews and Gentiles.

" 15. To show that the LORD *is* upright: *he is* my rock, and *there is* no unrighteousness in him."

The fruit brought forth in the church redounds to the glory of God, by whom the trees, in this his new paradise, were planted; it shows to all the world that he is just and "upright" in his dealings; that he is true to his promises; immoveable, as a "rock," in his counsels; determined to punish the wicked, and to reward the good; so that when his proceedings shall come to be unfolded at the last day it will appear to men and angels, that "there is no unrighteousness in him."

* Essay on the Proper Lessons, by Mr. Wogan, vol. iii. p. 49.

PSALM XCIII.

Eighteenth Day.—Evening Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—The Jews acknowledge, that the kingdom of Messiah is prophesied of in this Psalm, and in all those which follow, to the hundredth. 1, 2. The church celebrates the majesty, power, and glory, of the eternal King; 3. describes the danger she is often in from persecutions, &c. but, 4. strengtheneth herself in God her Saviour, whose house, 5. ought to be, like himself, full of truth and holiness.

“ 1. The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, *wherewith* he hath girded himself: the world also is established, that it cannot be moved.”

From the beginning, God, as Creator, was sovereign Lord of the universe. He was also formerly, in a more especial manner, King of Israel. But since that time, a new and spiritual kingdom hath been erected by Jesus Christ, as Redeemer, whom the church now celebrates, and whose praises she sings continually. Risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, the Lord Jesus reigneth, and shall reign, “till he hath put all enemies under his feet:” 1 Cor. xv. 25. By the glorification of his human nature, he is “clothed with majesty:” “All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth;” Matt. xxviii. 18. so that he is “girded with strength;” and through that strength, he hath “established” the new “world,” that is to say, his church, that it “cannot be moved,” or subverted, by all the powers of earth and hell.

“ 2. Thy throne *is* established of old; thou *art* from everlasting.”

Earthly thrones are temporary; they are set up, and cast down again, neither is any trust to be reposed in them. But the throne of Christ is eternal and unchangeable. Constituted before the foundation of the world, it is to endure when no traces of such a system having once existed shall any more be found.

“ 3. The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. 4. The LORD on high *is* mightier than the noise of many waters, *yea, than* the mighty waves of the sea.”

In the first of these verses, the church appears like a ship in a stormy sea, to which she is often compared. Persecutions and afflictions are those “floods,” those “waves” of this troublesome world, which threaten every moment to overwhelm and sink her. With a fearful and desponding tone of voice, therefore, she crieth out, “The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves!” But immediately she strengtheneth and comforteth herself in the Lord her God: “The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, *yea, than* the mighty waves of the sea.” He can say to sorrows and temptations, as he doth to the waters of the ocean, “Peace, be still; hitherto shall ye come, but no farther:” and his word is endued with equal power in both cases.

“ 5. Thy testimonies are very sure; holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.”

God’s “ testimonies ” are the promises made in Scripture to the church, that he will be with her, during the afflictions which befall her here below, and will, in time, deliver her out of all her troubles. These “ testimonies are very sure ; ” these promises do not, they cannot, fail. “ Holiness,” therefore, which consisteth in obedience and patience, “ becometh,” is the proper ornament, grace, and beauty of “ his house,” and of Christians, those living stones that compose it. Sacred and inviolable is the word of our King; sacred and inviolable should be the loyalty of his subjects.

PSALM XCIV.

ARGUMENT.—The Psalmist, complaining of corrupt and troublous times, in the person of the church, 1—4. prayeth for the downfall of prosperous wickedness; 5, 6. he describeth the cruelty, and, 7—11. reproveth the atheistical folly of those who persecute God’s people; 12, 13. he extolleth the blessedness of the persecuted, if they are endued with faith and patience, inasmuch as, 14, 15. the divine promise and their future reward are certain; he, therefore, 16—19. throweth himself wholly upon God, whose mercies never fail, who, 20, 21. cannot be on the side of iniquity, but, 22, 23. will preserve his saints, and destroy their enemies.

“ 1. O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth, O God to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself. 2. Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth; render a reward to the proud.”

The church, however unjustly oppressed and afflicted, remembereth that "vengeance belongeth" not to her, had she the power to inflict it, but "to God" only, who hath said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay:" Rom. xii. 19. To him, therefore, she maketh her supplication, that he would manifest his glory in her salvation; that he would ascend the tribunal, "as judge of the earth," try her cause, and avenge her of her insolent and cruel persecutors.

"3. LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? 4. *How long* shall they utter *and* speak hard things? *and* all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?"

The "triumphs" of wickedness, the "hard speeches," taunts, and scoffs of infidelity, against Christ, and all who belong to him, are a continual grief of heart to the faithful in the world, who desire nothing so much as to see the empire of sin at an end, and the kingdom of righteousness established. But for this great event they must wait with patience, until the time appointed by the Father, when the iniquities of the world, and the sufferings of the church, shall be full. "I saw under the altar," saith the well-beloved John, "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them, and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their breth-

ren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." Rev. vi. 9. &c.

" 5. They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage. 6. They slay the widow, and stranger, and murder the fatherless."

Some instances of cruelty, exercised by the enemies against the "people and heritage" of God, are here specified. "Widows, strangers, and orphans," are destitute of the help and protection afforded by husbands, friends, and fathers. Christ is become an husband to the church, a father to her children, and the only friend to both in time of need. Else were we all in the state of strangers and orphans, exposed, with our widowed mother, to the unrelenting malice and fury of the great oppressor and murderer.

" 7. Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard *it*. 8. Understand, ye brutish among the people: and *ye* fools, when will ye be wise? 9. He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? 10. He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, *shall not he know?* or, he that instructeth the nations, shall not he rebuke; even he that teacheth man knowledge?"

The Psalmist informeth us, that men are encouraged in their injustice and villany, by a persuasion, that God doth not behold or regard what they do to his people. The absurdity of such a conceit is shown from these considerations; that it is God who bestoweth on man the powers of seeing and hearing,

and therefore that he himself must needs be possessed of those powers in the highest perfection; that it is God who hath instructed the world, by his revelations, in religious knowledge, and consequently, without all doubt, he cannot be ignorant of the use and abuse which men make of that his unspeakable gift.

“ 11. The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they *are* vanity.”

So far is God from being a stranger to the actions, that he is privy to the first “thoughts” of men, from whence those actions flow: he is acquainted with all their counsels against his church, and knoweth them to be as vain as the imagination that he is ignorant of them. The wicked can no more escape the hand, than they can elude the eye, of Heaven.

“ 12. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, or, instructest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law: 13. That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.”

Since, therefore, the schemes of the adversary are vain, and the counsel of Jehovah shall infallibly stand, happy is the man who, having learned, from the Scriptures of truth, the lessons of faith and patience, enjoys tranquillity of mind in time of trouble, while destruction is preparing for the impenitent. Then, when “the days of adversity” are over, shall pain and sorrow take a final leave of the righteous to go and dwell with the wicked, to eternal ages.

The former shall enter into the rest and joy of their Lord; the latter, into the fire prepared originally for the devil and his angels.

“ 14. For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance. 15. But judgment shall return unto righteousness; and all the upright in heart shall follow it.”

The faith and patience of the saints are built upon the foundation of God's promise “not to cast off and forsake,” however he may chasten and correct, his “people and inheritance.” At a fit time, “judgment shall return to righteousness,” which it might seem to have forsaken; iniquitous oppressors shall meet with the punishment they have deserved, and the faithful shall experience the promised redemption. For thus Dr. Hammond renders and expounds the last clause of the two verses under consideration—“and after this,” that is, after “judgment” shall have “returned to righteousness, all the upright in heart;” that is, it shall be their time; they shall succeed and flourish. Such were those halcyon days enjoyed by the Jews, after the fall of Babylon, and their return to their own land; such those times of refreshment to the church Christian, when the Pagan persecutions were at an end, and the Roman empire became Christian. Far more transcendent is the felicity of a soul, when it exchanges the miseries of the world for the delights of paradise, there to wait, with its sister spirits, until the bodies of saints shall pass from the dishonours of the grave to the glories of immortality.

“ 16. Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers? *or*, who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? 17. Unless the LORD *had been* my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.”

But in the mean season, while “evil-doers” are permitted to prosper, and “the workers of iniquity” carry on their designs, the prophet asks in the person of the church, who is there that will or can protect, defend, and deliver? The answer is, God only can do it: “Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence,” or I had almost been in the state of death. How often have our spiritual enemies arisen against us, threatening to bring us into a state of eternal death, but the Lord Jesus was our help and our salvation!

“ 18. When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.”

When the child of God, walking in the slippery paths of life, findeth himself falling into temptation, if he confesseth his inability to stand his ground, and crieth out, like Peter on the water, to his heavenly Father, “Lord, save me, I perish;” a merciful, gracious, and powerful hand will immediately be stretched out, to support his steps, and establish his goings.

“ 19. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.”

The excellent Norris, in a masterly sermon on this verse, has given us the following elegant and affecting paraphrase of it:—“When my mind sallies out into a multitude of thoughts, and those

thoughts make me sad and heavy, anxious and solicitous, as presenting to my view my own weakness and infirmity, and the universal vanity of all those seeming props and stays, upon which my deluded soul was apt to lean; the many great calamities of life, and the much greater terrors of death; the known miseries of the present state, and the darkness and uncertainty of the future: still urging me with fresh arguments of sorrow, and opening new and new scenes of melancholy, till my soul begins to faint and sink under the burden she has laid upon herself: when I am thus thoughtful, and thus sorrowful, then it is, O my God, that I feel the relief of thy divine refreshments; I find myself supported and borne up by the strong tide of thy consolations, which raise my drooping head, strike a light into my soul, and make me not only dismiss, but even forget, that sorrow and melancholy, which my thoughtfulness had brought upon me." Who that reads this will not thankfully take and follow the advice offered in another part of the same discourse? "Whenever, therefore, thoughts arise in thy heart, and troubles from those thoughts, when thy mind is dark and cloudy, and all the regions of the soul are overcast; then betake thyself to thy oratory, either to thy closet, or the church, and there entertain thy soul with the pleasures of religion, and the satisfactions of a clear conscience." See Norris' Practical Discourses, vol. iii. ser. 4.

"20. Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?"

One consideration which affordeth comfort to the

faithful under persecution and affliction, is this, that God can never be on the side of oppression and injustice, though, to answer wise and salutary purposes, he may, for a time, suffer them to have the dominion and to establish iniquity by law. A distinction there certainly must be between right and wrong; and the former must as certainly triumph at the last day.

“ 21. They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.”

Righteousness and innocence are most atrocious crimes, in the eyes of wickedness and guilt. For these crimes Cain slew his brother Abel, the Jews crucified Christ, the Pagans tortured and murdered his disciples, and bad men in all ages have persecuted the good. “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.” 1 John iii. 13.

“ 22. But the LORD is my defence : and my God is the rock of my refuge. 23. And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; *yea*, the LORD our God shall cut them off.”

Jehovah is our “defence;” we fear not the fiery darts of the enemy. He is the “rock of our refuge;” we bid defiance to the rage and malice of earth and hell. Armed with the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, we rise superior to every effort of diabolical malice and secular power; waiting, in patience and hope, for the coming of that day, when He who hateth unrighteousness, and with whom the throne of iniquity can have no fellow-

ship, shall visit the wickedness of the wicked upon them; when the world of the ungodly shall share the fate of apostate Jerusalem, and the righteous shall be glorified with their Lord and Saviour.

PSALM XCV.

Nineteenth Day.—Morning Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm hath been long used in the Christian church, as a proper introduction to her holy services. It containeth, 1, 2, an exhortation to praise Jehovah, 3. for his greatness, 4, 5. and for his works of creation; 6. men are invited to worship him as their Maker, and, 7. as their Preserver; 8—11. they are warned against tempting and provoking him, by the example of the Israelites in the wilderness. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews hath taught us to consider the Psalm as an address to believers under the Gospel.

“1. O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.”

In this first verse, Christians now exhort and stir up each other, as the Jews did of old, to employ their voices in honour of Jehovah, to celebrate “the rock of their salvation.” Jesus, by redeeming us from our enemies, hath opened our lips, and our mouths ought, therefore, to show forth his praise. He is the Rock of ages, in which is opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness; the Rock which attends the church in the wilderness, pouring forth the water of life for her use and comfort; the Rock which is our fortress against every enemy, shadowing and refreshing a weary land. “O come, then, let us

sing unto this our LORD; let us make a joyful noise unto this rock of our salvation."

" 2. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."

The "presence" of Jehovah dwelt formerly between the cherubim, in a tabernacle, or temple, made with hands, whether the Israelites were to resort, until God became manifest in the flesh. After that time, the divine presence left the synagogue, and removed into the Christian church; by her we are now invited to "come before that presence with thanksgiving," and, while we "make a joyful noise," by chanting these divine Psalms," to imitate, in some measure, the heavenly choirs, who "rest not," from their blessed employment of praising God, "day or night." Rev. iv. 8.

" 3. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods."

It is not without reason, that we are exhorted to give thanks and praise unto our God and King; for he is "worthy to receive glory and blessing:" Rev. v. 12. He is a God above all that are called by that name; above those deities, which were once worshipped by the ancient Heathen; above the world, which still continues to be an object of adoration among infatuated mortals. His throne is over all, and power and dominion are his.

" 4. In his hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is his also. 5. The sea is

his, and he made it; and his hands formed the dry land."

The treasures, which lie hid in the "deep places" of the earth beneath; the majestic pride and "strength of the hills," which tower above, and lift up their heads to heaven; the unnumbered waves of the great and wide "sea," which roll in perpetual motion round the world; the rich and variegated produce of the "dry land," crowned with verdure and beauty; together with every thing that liveth in the waters or on the earth; all are under the government of our God; by him were all things created; by him have all things been redeemed.

"6. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our Maker."

As in the beginning of the Psalm we were called upon to "praise" Jehovah, so here we are invited to humble ourselves before him in "prayer." From him we had our being; him, therefore, we are to supplicate for every other blessing, both in this life, and that which is to come. And since he made our bodies, as well as our souls, it is meet and right that they should bear their part in his service, and that internal worship should be accompanied and signified by that which is external.

"7. For he *is* our God, and we *are* the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand."

An additional reason why we should both praise Jehovah, and pray to him, is the peculiar relation into which he hath been pleased to put himself by

the covenant of grace; “he is our God;” we are the objects of his tender care and unspeakable love: we are his “people,” and his “sheep;” his chosen flock, which he hath purchased with his blood, which he feeds with his word, and refreshes with his Spirit, in fair and pleasant pastures. From those pastures, O thou good Shepherd! suffer us not to stray; or, if we do stray, bring us speedily back again, by any means which thou, in thine infinite wisdom, shalt think fit. Wholesome is the discipline which drives us into the fold, and keeps us there.

“8. To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, *and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness*: 9. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.”

The first clause of these two verses may be joined to the preceding verse thus, “He is our God, we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand, if ye will hear his voice to-day;” that is, if ye will be his obedient people, he will continue to be your God. Or else the word ⲓⲛ, translated “if,” may be rendered in the optative form, “O that you would hear his voice “to-day,” saying unto you, “Harden not,” &c. However this be, what follows to the end of the Psalm is undoubtedly spoken in the person of God himself, who may be considered as addressing us, in these latter days, by the Gospel of his Son; for so the apostle teaches us to apply the whole passage, Heb. iii. iv. The Israelites, when they came out of Egypt, had a day of probation, and a promised rest to succeed it; but, by unbelief and disobedience, they to whom it was pro-

mised, that is, the generation of those who came out of Egypt, fell short of it, and died in the wilderness. The Gospel, in like manner, offers, both to Jew and Gentile, another day of probation in this world, and another promised rest to succeed it, which remaineth for the people of God, in heaven. All whom it concerns are, therefore, exhorted to beware lest they forfeit the second rest, as murmuring and rebellious Israel came short of the first. The verses now before us allude to what passed at the place called "Massah," and "Meribah," from the people there "tempting" and striving with their God, notwithstanding all the mighty works which he had wrought for them, before their eyes. *Exod. xvii. 7.*

"10. Forty years long was I grieved, *or*, disgusted, with *this* generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways."

O the desperate presumption of man, that he should offend his Maker "forty years!" O the patience and long suffering of his Maker, that he should allow him forty years to offend in! Sin begins in the "heart," by its desires "wandering" and going astray after forbidden objects; whence follows inattention to the "ways" of God; to his dispensations, and our own duty. Lust in the heart, like vapour in the stomach, soon affects the head, and clouds the understanding.

"11. Unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest."

Exclusion from Canaan was the punishment of

Israelitish contumacy; exclusion from heaven is to be the punishment of disobedience among Christians. To take vengeance on those who reject the Gospel terms, is no less a part of the covenant and oath of God, than it is to save and glorify those who accept them. Yet men continue deliberately to commit those sins, which the Almighty standeth thus engaged to punish with destruction!* “Take heed,” therefore, “brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; while it is said, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke; howbeit, not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he, that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being made us of en-

* Sensus hujus loci ex Paulo sic concinnandus: nempe requiem a Deo Israëlitis esse promissam in terrâ Chananæâ: omnes tamen interim in deserto cecidisse hâc requie frustratos: quare Spiritum Sanctum per Davidem ad novam requiem invitasse; ad novum illud sabbatum ab ipso mundi exordio diei septimæ requie figuratum, novumque indixisse diem quo sub Christo, in Ecclesiâ, ac cœlesti patriâ quiesceremus, nisi essemus increduli: unde sic concludit Paulus: “Festinemus ingredi in illam requiem.” BOS-SUET.

tering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Heb. iii. 12. &c.

PSALM XCVI.

ARGUMENT.—By common consent of Jews and Christians, we apply this Psalm to the times of Messiah. 1—4. Men are exhorted to sing his praises; to declare his salvation; 4, 5. to acknowledge his supremacy over the gods of the nations, with, 6. the glory and beauty of his sanctuary; 7, 9. to give him the honour, the worship, and the obedience due unto him, and 10. to publish the glad tidings of his kingdom being established: 11—13. the whole creation is called upon to rejoice at this great event. We find, by 1 Chron. xvi. that David delivered out this Psalm, to be sung on occasion of temporal blessings prefigurative of future spiritual ones.

“1. O sing unto the LORD a new song; sing unto the LORD, all the earth.”

Jehovah, our Redeemer, is the person whose praises are to be sung. They are to be sung in a “new” song; a song calculated to celebrate new mercies, prefigured by old ones wrought for Israel in former times; a song fit for the voices of renewed and regenerate men to sing in the new Jerusalem, in those new heavens and that new earth, which constitute the new creation, or kingdom of Jesus Christ. And as the mercies of God are universal, extending themselves not only to the Jews, but to all the nations of the earth, all the nations of the earth are therefore exhorted to bear a part in this new song;

“Sing unto the LORD a new song; sing unto the LORD, all the earth.” Thus St. John, after reckoning up the 144,000, or full number of those who were sealed to salvation from among the tribes of Israel, proceeds to tell us, that he “beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” All these sung a new song, which none could learn but the redeemed: they “cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.” See Rev. v. vii. xiv.

“2. Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day.”

Again, are we excited to sing unto the Lord Jesus, and in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, to bless his saving NAME. The latter clause of the verse is very expressive in the original, בשרו, “preach,” or, “evangelize his salvation from day to day;” let it be the constant theme of all your discourses; publish it to the world in every possible way, by your words, and by your actions; and while God allows you breath and life, let one day transmit the glorious employment to another, until it be resumed and continued in heaven to all eternity.

“3. Declare his glory among the heathen; his wonders among all people.”

The “glory” of Messiah in his incarnation, his life, his death, resurrection, ascension, and kingdom, the “wonders” or miracles by him wrought upon the

bodies and souls of men; these were the things “declared among the heathen,” even “among all people,” by the apostles and their successors; these things are still declared, by the Scriptures read, and sermons preached, in the church, which was gathered originally from among the Gentiles.

“4. For the LORD *is* great, and greatly to be praised; he *is* to be feared above all gods. 5. For all the gods of the nations *are* idols, or things of nought; but the LORD made the heavens.”

Christ is to be celebrated, his glory and wonders are to be declared, because he is, in every possible sense, “great;” great in dignity, in power, in mercy; and therefore “greatly to be praised” by every creature. The heavens and heavenly bodies, adored by the nations, were no gods, but the works of “his” hands, who had fixed his everlasting throne high above them all. At the publication of the Gospel, idolatry fell before it; and what is the world itself but one great idol, which is to fall and disappear in like manner?

“6. Honour and majesty *are* before him; strength and beauty *are* in his sanctuary.”

What are the splendour and magnificence of earthly courts, when compared with that glory and majesty, the unutterable brightness of which fills the court of the heavenly King? Some portion of this celestial light is communicated, through grace, to the Christian church, which is described by St. John, under images borrowed from the figurative sanctuary, and the earthly Jerusalem, as an edifice

composed of gold and precious stones, illuminated by the glory of God and the Lamb residing in the midst of it. See Rev. xxi.

“7. Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds, *or*, families, *or*, tribes, of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 8. Give unto the LORD the glory *due unto* his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. 9. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.”

In these three verses, the tribes of the spiritual Israel are enjoined to ascribe to their Redeemer all “glory and strength,” as essentially inherent in him, and by him communicated to his people; to give him the entire “glory of his name,” and of that “salvation” imported by it; to bring the “sacrifices” of the new law, and to assemble in the “courts” of his house; to worship him in that “beauty of holiness” which is constituted by the regular and solemn services of the church; to “fear” and obey him, as the subjects of a King invested with plenitude of power in heaven and earth.

“10. Say among the heathen, *that* the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously.”

In other words—Make proclamation, therefore, O ye apostles and preachers of the Gospel, that a new and eternal kingdom is erected; the usurped empire of Satan is overthrown, and the Lord Jesus, having redeemed mankind, reigneth in the hearts of his people by faith, a community is formed, not

upon the plan of secular policy, but upon the divine principle of heavenly love; it is established on immoveable foundations, nor shall the gates of hell prevail against it: righteousness shall dwell in it, since He, who is the King of Righteousness, presides, directs, and determines all things, by his Word, and his Spirit.

“ 11. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof: 12. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord.”

Transported with a view of these grand events, and beholding in spirit the advent of King Messiah, the Psalmist exults in most jubilant and triumphant strains, calling the whole creation to break forth into joy, and to celebrate the glories of redemption. The heavens, with the innumerable orbs fixed in them, which, while they roll and shine, declare the glory of beautified saints; the earth, which, made fertile by celestial influences, showeth the work of grace on the hearts of men here below; the field, which, crowned with the produce of an hundred fold, displayeth an emblem of the fruit yielded by the seed of the word in the church; the trees of the wood, lofty, verdant, and diffuse, apt representatives of holy persons, those “ trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah,” Isa. lxi. 3. whose examples are eminent, fair, and extensive; all these are, by the prophet, excited to join in a chorus of thanksgiving to the Maker and Redeemer of the world.

“ 13. For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the

earth; he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth."

The coming of Christ is twofold; first he came to sanctify the creature, and he will come again to glorify it. Either of his kingdoms, that of grace, or that of glory, may be signified by his "judging the world in righteousness and truth." If creation be represented as rejoicing at the establishment of the former, how much greater will the joy be at the approach of the latter; seeing that, notwithstanding Christ be long since come in the flesh, though he be ascended into heaven, and have sent the Spirit from thence, yet "the whole creation," as the apostle speaks, Rom. viii. 22. "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, expecting to be delivered, from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body:" when at the renovation of all things, man, new made, shall return to the days of his youth, to begin an immortal spring, and be for ever young.

PSALM XCVII.

ARGUMENT.—In this Psalm, 1. the reign of Christ is again celebrated, and the nations are again called to rejoice on that account: 2—7. He is described as taking vengeance on his enemies, overthrowing idolatry in the Heathen world, commanding adoration from all creatures, and, 8, 9. inspiring gladness into the church, by subduing her enemies: 10—12. The duties of holiness, thankfulness, and religious joy, are inculcated.

“1. The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad *thereof*.”

Triumphant over death and hell, the Lord Jesus is gone up on high, and “reigneth.” What greater cause can the whole earth have to “rejoice;” yea, even the most distant isles of the Gentiles, to “be glad,” and to sing for joy; since they are all become his subjects, and share the unspeakable blessings of so gracious a reign? We Britons, as inhabiting one of those heathen isles, and enjoying so fair a portion of evangelical blessings, have reason to repeat this verse, with a particular pleasure and energy. The Hebrews called by the name of “iles,” יַם־יָם, not only countries surrounded by the sea, but all the countries which the sea divided from them; so that the term became synonymous with “Gentiles.” Thus, it is said, Isa. xlii. 4. “The ISLES shall wait for his law;” which passage, Matt. xii. 21. is expounded as follows: “In him shall the GENTILES trust.”

“ 2. Clouds and darkness *are* round above him : righteousness and judgment *are* the habitation, *or*, establishment, of his throne.”

When the mercy and grace of our heavenly King are to be described, he is likened to the sun shining in a clear firmament, and gladdening universal nature with his beneficent rays. But when we are to conceive an idea of him as going forth, in “justice and judgment,” to discomfit and punish his adversaries, the imagery is then borrowed from a troubled sky; he is pictured as surrounded by “clouds and darkness;” from whence issue lightnings and thunders, storms and tempests, affrighting and confounding the wicked and impenitent.

“ 3. A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about. 4. His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw and trembled. 5. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD; at the presence of the LORD of the whole earth.”

The judgments of God, and their effects upon the world, are here set forth, under the usual similitude of lightning and fire from heaven, causing the earth to tremble, and the mountains to melt and dissolve away. The exaltation of Christ, to the throne of his kingdom, was followed by a dreadful display of that vengeance which broke in pieces the Jewish nation, and brought their civil and religious polity to an utter dissolution. In the history of their destruction, the world of the ungodly may view a striking picture of the great and terrible day,

when the Lord Jesus shall render a recompense to all his enemies. He is then to descend in flaming fire; lightnings shall be his harbingers; the earth shall tremble; and the hills shall, literally, "melt like wax at the presence of Jehovah."

"6. The heavens declare his righteousness; and all the people see his glory."

"The heavens," by the manifestation of vengeance from thence, reveal, "declare," and proclaim, the "righteous" judgments of Messiah; and all "the people" upon earth are witnesses of the "glory" of his victory over every thing that opposeth itself to the establishment of his kingdom. This will be more eminently the case at the second advent, when the trumpet of the archangel shall proclaim his approach in the clouds of heaven, and all the tribes of the earth shall see him coming in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.

"7. Confounded be, *or*, shall be, all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all *ye* gods."

When Jesus was exalted, his Gospel published, and his power and glory made known in the Heathen world, men grew "ashamed" of their "images, and boasted themselves in their idols" no more. The last clause of our verse, "Worship him, all ye gods," declares the supremacy of Christ over all that are called gods, אֱלֹהִים, in heaven and in earth, who are enjoined to pay adoration unto him, instead of claiming it for themselves.

“ 8. Sion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced, because of thy judgments, O Lord. 9. For thou, LORD, *art* high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.”

The inhabitants of the new “ Sion,” or the people of God, “ heard” the tidings, that idols and idolatry were fallen, and the Lord Jesus reigned triumphant; they heard, and “ were glad; the daughters of Judah,” or Christian churches, “ rejoiced” in the Holy Ghost, with joy unspeakable, “ because of these judgments” of their God upon his enemies, whereby he evinced himself superior to the powers of the earth, and the gods of the nations. Thus, at the fall of Babylon, it is said, Rev. xviii. 20. “ Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.” And Eusebius speaks, in the following terms, of the times under Constantine, which succeeded the overthrow of Maxentius and Maximin; “ A bright and glorious day, no cloud overshadowing it, did enlighten, with rays of heavenly light, the churches of Christ over all the earth;—and among all Christians there was an inexpressible joy, and a kind of celestial gladness.” Ecclesiast. Hist. B. x.

“ 10. Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints: he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.”

Having sung the glory of the Redeemer, the Psalmist delineates the duty of the redeemed. They are characterized by their “ love of God;” they are enjoined to “ hate evil;” this hatred is, indeed, a

consequence, and a sure proof, of that love, when it is genuine and sincere. Religion must be rooted in the heart, and spring from thence. A Christian must not only serve God outwardly, but must inwardly “love” him; he must not content himself with abstaining from overt acts of sin, but must truly “hate” it. They who do so, are “the saints of God, whose souls he preserveth” from evil, and will finally “deliver” from the evil one, and his associates, by a happy death, and a glorious resurrection.

“11. Light is sown for the righteous; and gladness for the upright in heart.”

However gloomy our prospects may at any time be, let us wait patiently, as the husbandman doth, all the winter, in expectation of a future crop, from the seed which lieth buried in the earth. “Light and gladness are sown for the righteous and true hearted,” though they may not yet appear: the seed-time is in this world; the harvest will be in that to come. “In due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Gal. vi. 9.

“12. Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.”

Tribulation itself, therefore, should not prevent our “rejoicing in Jehovah our righteousness,” who justifieth us from our sins; no adversity ought to make us negligent in celebrating, with thanksgiving, the “commemorations of his holiness,” which the church hath appointed to be observed; to the end that we may always remember, with gratitude, how

great things he hath done for us already, and reflect, with comfort, on those much greater things which he hath promised to do for us hereafter."

PSALM XCVIII.

Nineteenth Day.—Evening Prayer.

ARGUMENT.—In this evangelical hymn, the prophet, 1—3. extols the miracles, the victory, the salvation, the righteousness, the mercy, and truth, of the Redeemer; on account of which, 4—9. he calls upon man, and the whole creation, to rejoice and praise Jehovah.

"1. O sing unto the LORD a new song, for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory."

New mercies and wonders demand new songs. And what mercies, what wonders, can be compared with those wrought by the holy Jesus? "Go and tell John," saith he to John's disciples; go and tell all the world, saith he to his own disciples, "the things which ye see and hear;" the marvellous things which I do to the bodies and to the souls of men. "The blind receive their sight," and the ignorant minds are enlightened with knowledge; "the lame walk," and strength is communicated to impotent souls; "the lepers are cleansed," and the lascivious rendered chaste; "the deaf hear," and obstinate listen to instruction and reproof; "the dead are raised," and sinners justified; "the Gospel is preached," and the world converted. "His own right hand, and his holy arm," hath done these marvellous things, without and against all worldly

power; not by spear and sword, but by patience and charity, he hath “gotten the victory,” and gained the glorious day.

“2. The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen.”

The “salvation” of Jehovah was “made known” by the preaching of Christ himself in Judea, for the space of three years; his “righteousness,” whereby sinners are justified, was “openly showed,” by the sermons of his apostles, “in the sight of the heathen.” Still let that salvation be made known, still let that righteousness be openly showed, by the ministers of the Gospel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and the remnant of the Jews converted; until antichrist be overthrown, and death himself fallen before the all-conquering cross.

“3. He hath remembered his mercy and truth towards the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.”

In sending the Messiah, God showed himself mindful of the promises, which “mercy” prompted him to make, and “truth” required him to perform. These promises were made to “the house of Israel;” to the lost sheep of that house, Christ declared himself sent; and the apostles offered salvation first to the Jews: but to them it was never intended that evangelical blessings should be confined. The prophets spake in plain terms of the call of the Gentiles, who were to be adopted into the holy family, and made the children of Abraham. The Gospel was accordingly preached to the nations, the apostles

made their progress through the world, and “all the ends of the earth saw the salvation of God.” The Jews fell from the faith of their fathers, and, to this day, continue in their apostacy. And are not the Gentiles, in their turn, falling away, after the same example of unbelief? “Remember,” yet once again, O Lord, thy “mercy and truth toward the house of Israel;” yet once again let “all the ends of the earth see thy salvation.”

“4. Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth; make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. 5. Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. 6. With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD the King.”

The Psalmist, beholding in spirit the accomplishment of the promises, the advent of Christ, and the glory of his kingdom, thinks it criminal in any creature to be silent; he bids the whole earth break forth into joy, and exult in God our Saviour, with every token of gratitude and thankfulness; with voices, and instruments of all kinds, in perfect harmony, with tempers and affections according in like manner, men are enjoined to sound aloud the praises of their great Redeemer.

“7. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. 8. Let the floods clap *their* hands, let the hills be joyful together, 9. Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.”

The inanimate parts of creation are called upon

to bear their parts in the new song, and to fill up the universal chorus of praise and thanksgiving, in honour of him that sitteth upon the throne. Or, perhaps, the converted heathen nations are intended under the figures of the “sea,” the “rivers,” and the “hills,” and their exultations expressed by the noise of many waters, their beauty and fruitfulness by those of the hills, when, crowned with plenty, they, as it were, laugh and sing, at the approach of harvest. The subject of this general joy is, as before, in Psalm xcvi. 13. the advent of Messiah to reform the world, to execute judgment upon the wicked, and to establish a kingdom of righteousness upon the earth. We expect his second advent to restore all things, to judge the world, to condemn his enemies, and to begin his “glorious” reign. Then shall heaven and earth rejoice, and the joy of the redeemed shall be full.

PSALM XCIX.

ARGUMENT.—Under images borrowed from the old dispensation, the prophet celebrates, 1. the reign of Messiah, and the submission of his enemies; 2—4. his exaltation, holiness, power, and justice; which, 5. men are exhorted to acknowledge and adore. 6—9. The examples of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, are introduced, to encourage us in worshipping and serving our God and Saviour.

“1. The LORD reigneth, let the people tremble: he sitteth *between* the cherubims; let the earth be moved, *or*, bow.”

Jehovah reigneth in the Christian church, as he did of old in the Jewish temple; when he appeared

between the cherubims in the holy of holies, in the form and likeness of a MAN, encompassed with "glory:" Ezek. i. 26. Numb. vii. 89. he subdued the enemies of Israel, when they raged most furiously against his people; he will also bring into subjection the adversaries of the Gospel, and finally render us victorious over the powers of darkness. The passions and affections may mutiny and rebel; but if Christ reign in the heart by faith, they must soon tremble and submit.

"2. The LORD is great in Sion, and he is high above all people. 3. Let them praise thy great and terrible name: for it is holy."

The power and pre-eminence of the Redeemer, whom no creature is able to resist, are reasons why all should save themselves, by yielding in time to his sceptre; by taking the benefit of his protection, instead of incurring his displeasure; by "praising his great, terrible, and holy name," instead of suffering the almighty vengeance, which he, who owns that name, can inflict.

"4. 'The King's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou execute judgment and righteousness in Jacob. 5. Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool: for he is holy.'"

For although the "strength" of our King be infinite, yet it is never exerted, but in "righteousness" and just "judgment," which are his delight: they compose the firm basis of his throne, and direct his whole administration. Impenitent rebels must feel the weight of his arm, and none can accuse

the justice of their punishment: but in all other cases, he is "mighty only to save:" Isa. lxiii. 1. This holiness of his proceedings, this due temperament of justice with mercy, the redeemed are exhorted to acknowledge and to proclaim, falling down before the throne, and uttering the angelical trisagion, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

"6. Moses and Aaron among his priests, *or* chief rulers, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them. 7. He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance *that* he gave them."

To encourage the faithful in the worship of God, the examples of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, are adduced, men of like infirmities with ourselves, whose prayers were heard, both for themselves and others, and answers were returned to them from the mystic "cloud," that symbol of the divine presence, which, for a while, was itinerant with the camp in the wilderness, and then became fixed in the tabernacle at Shiloh, till its last removal to mount Sion. These men were heard through the intercession of the great Mediator, whom they represented. Through that same intercession, our prayers also are heard, if we "keep his testimonies, and the ordinances that he hath given us."

"8. Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions."

The construction of the verse seems to be this:

“ O Lord our God, thou didst hear, or answer them,” that is, the afore-mentioned typical mediators, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel; “ thou becamest a forbearing God for them,” or, at their intercession; and that, “ even when punishing,” or, when thou hadst begun to punish, “ the wicked deeds of them,” that is, not of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, but of the people, who had transgressed, and for whom they interceded. This was the case, when Moses interceded for the idolaters; Exod. xxxii. 32. Aaron for the schismatics; Numb. xvi. 47. and Samuel for the whole nation; 1 Sam. vii. 9. “ Pray one for another,” saith an apostle to Christians, “ that ye may be healed: the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James v. 16.

“ 9. Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill: for the LORD our God is holy.”

The Psalmist repeats his exhortation, enforced by the preceding examples of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, and again invites all people to worship a “ holy” God in a “ holy” place, and to adore the consummate rectitude of all his proceedings, singing, with the spirits above, “ Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways thou King of saints.” Rev. xv. 3.

PSALM C.

ARGUMENT.—The Psalmist invites all the world to join with the Israelites in the service of him who was kind and gracious to them beyond expression. Accordingly, we Christians now properly use this Psalm in acknowledgment of God's wonderful love to us in Christ; by whom we offer up continually spiritual sacrifices, for redeeming us by the sacrifice which he made of himself; for making the world anew, and creating us again unto good works; according to his faithful promises, which we may depend upon for ever.

PATRICK.

“ 1. Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands: 2. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.”

The prophet addresseth himself to “ all lands,” or to “ all the earth;” to Gentiles as well as Jews. He exhorteth them to “ make a joyful noise,” a noise like that of the trumpets at the time of jubilee, a sound of universal triumph and exaltation, in honour of “ Jehovah,” now become their Lord and Saviour. The service of this our Master is perfect freedom; it is a service of love, a freedom from Pharaoh and the task-masters, from Satan and our own imperious lusts; it is a redemption from the most cruel bondage, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Let us therefore do as we are commanded; let us “ serve the Lord with gladness;” and when we come “ before his presence” in the temple, let it be “ with singing” to the praise and glory of our Redeemer. Thus he is served in heaven, and thus he delighteth to be served on earth.

“ 3. Know ye that the LORD *he is* God, *it is* he *that* hath made us, and not we ourselves; *we are*

his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Or, He hath made us, and we are his*, his people, and the sheep of his pasture."

The motives here urged for serving and praising Jehovah, are the same with those above, in Psalm xcv. 6, 7. namely, that he is our "God," engaged by covenant on our behalf; that his hands created us, and have since new created us; that we stand in the peculiar relation of his "people," whom he hath chosen to himself, and over whom he presideth as King; that we are "the sheep of his pasture," for whom the good Shepherd laid down his life, and whom he nourisheth, by the word and sacraments, unto eternal life. These are points which every Christian ought to "know" and believe, unto his soul's health. And whoever doth know them aright, will ever be ready with heart and voice to obey the injunction which followeth in the next verse.

"4. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name."

The Christian church is a temple, whose "gates" stand continually open, for the admission of the nations from all the four quarters of the world. Rev. xxi. 13, 25. Into the "courts" of this temple, which are now truly "courts of the Gentiles," all men are invited to come, and offer their evangelical sacrifices of "confession and praise;" to express their

* "I am persuaded that the Masoretical correction וְלִי (and we are 'his') is right: the construction and parallelism both favour it."—Bishop LOWTH. A correspondent suggests—Might not the clause be rendered interrogatively—"Are not we his people, and the sheep of his pasture?"

gratitude to their Saviour, and “bless” his gracious and hallowed “name.” How glorious will be that day, which shall behold the everlasting gates of heaven lifting up their heads, and disclosing to view those courts above, into which the children of the resurrection are to enter, there, with angels and archangels, to dwell and sing for evermore!

“5. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting: and his truth *endureth* to all generations.”

“Jehovah is good;” he is the source of all beauty and perfection in the creature; how altogether lovely must he needs be in himself! “His mercy is everlasting,” extending through time into eternity; and “his truth,” or fidelity in accomplishing his promises, “endureth to all generations,” evidenced to the whole race of mankind, from Adam to his last born son. The Psalms which celebrate these attributes, will never, therefore, be out of date, but each successive generation will chant them with fresh propriety, and fresh delight, until by saints and angels they are sung new in the kingdom of God.

PSALM CI.

ARGUMENT.—In the person of David, advanced to the throne of Israel, we hear king Messiah declaring how he intended to walk, and to govern his household the church; and also describing the qualifications which he should require in his ministers and servants.

“1. I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.”

David, having determined to sing unto Jehovah, chooseth for his theme “mercy and judgment;” either

that mercy which God hath shown to him, and that judgment which hath been inflicted on his enemies; or else, that upright administration of mercy and judgment, with which he himself intended to bless his people. The righteous administration of mercy and judgment in the kingdom of Messiah, is a topic on which his subjects always expatiate with pleasure and profit. His mercy encourageth the greatest of sinners to hope; his judgments forbid the best of men to presume.

“ 2. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.”

In return for the favours of heaven, we hear the Israelitish monarch declaring his resolution to set his court and kingdom an example of true wisdom, and unshaken integrity; at the same time, sighing for that visitation of divine grace, which alone could enable him to put his resolution in practice.—“ O when wilt thou come unto me?” This was ever the voice of the church, longing for the presence of God in human nature, “ O when wilt thou come unto me?” And this must ever be the wish of a Christian, who knoweth, that though in himself he be nothing, yet that he can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth him by his Spirit in the inner man. Messiah was the only King of Israel, whose life held forth to his subjects a pattern of wisdom and righteousness, and whose death procured them grace, in their different measures and degrees, to follow it.

“ 3. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside, *it* shall not cleave to me.”

“ I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes;” that is, I will not propose to myself, or think of carrying into execution, any iniquitous scheme of politics, however advantageous and tempting it may appear; I will turn away my eyes and my attention, and reject it at once: “ I hate the work of them that turn aside;” of them who, in their counsels and their actions, deviate from the divine law to serve their own interest; “ it shall not cleave to me;” no such corrupt principle shall adhere to my soul, or find a place in my affections. How noble a resolution for a king to make; but how difficult a one for a king to keep! Thou only, O King of Righteousness, didst never set any wicked thing before thine eyes; thou only hadst a perfect aversion to the ways of transgressors.

“ 4. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.”

As is the king, so will be the court; as is the master of the house, such will be those of his household. David, having resolved to “ walk within his house with a perfect,” a sincere and upright “ heart,” determines at the same time to expel from thence all whose hearts were perverted and depraved: as he would “ set no wicked thing before his eyes,” so neither would he form any connexions with “ wicked persons;” they should not be of his acquaintance, much less should they be his favourites. In the same manner speaketh our heavenly King, with regard to the appointment of his ministers and servants—“ I know you not, whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.” Luke xiii. 27.

“ 5. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him

will I cut off: him that hath an high look, and a proud, *or*, extended, and *therefore*, insatiable, heart, will not I suffer."

Detraction, ambition, and avarice, are three weeds which spring and flourish in the rich soil of a court. The Psalmist declareth his resolution to undertake the difficult task of eradicating them, for the benefit of his people, that Israelites might not be harassed by informers, or oppressed by insolent and rapacious ministers. Shall we imagine these vices less odious in the eyes of that King whose character was composed of humility and charity? or will Christ admit those tempers into the court of heaven, which David determined to exclude from his court upon earth?

"6. Mine eyes *shall be* upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me."

The "eyes" of princes cannot be better employed than in looking around them, in order to choose, from among their own subjects, fit and able men to transact the public business; men of inviolable "fidelity," and unshaken integrity; men who know how to think aright, and how to speak what they think; men likewise who "walk in the perfect way" of holiness, who do not disgrace their politics by their lives, or prejudice their master's cause by their sins, more than they can ever advance it by their abilities. Bishops may be called the "eyes" of Christ; they are to "overlook" his people, and we pray him at the seasons of ordination, "so to guide and govern their minds, that they may faithfully and wisely make choice of fit persons to serve in the sacred ministry of the church."

"7. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within

my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight."

To purge a court of "deceit" and "falsehood," was a resolution worthy king David, worthy the representative of him, who styleth himself THE TRUTH, from whose heavenly palace and city will be for ever excluded, as St. John informeth us, "whosoever loveth and maketh A LIE." Rev. xxii. 15.

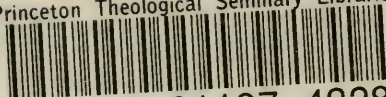
"8. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land: that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD."

Every earthly prince should consider himself as raised to a throne, and invested with power, "for the punishment of wickedness and vice, and the maintenance of God's true religion and virtue." "Early," therefore, in the "morning" of his reign, he should set about the work of reformation, that so the blessings of heaven may descend upon himself and his people, according to the infallible promises of the Most High. And let each individual, in like manner, and for the same reason, be zealous and diligent to reform his own heart and ways, ever mindful of that future most awful morning, when the King of Righteousness shall "cut off," with the sword of eternal judgment, "all wicked doers from that city of Jehovah," the new and heavenly Jerusalem.

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